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# THE GROWTH OF RELIGION

*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

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History

# THE GROWTH OF RELIGION

A STUDY OF ITS ORIGIN & DEVELOPMENT

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

(Author of "*The Bankruptcy of Religion*," etc.)

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## PREFACE

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IN the very large literature which we now have concerning the origin and development of religion, there is either too generous an element of speculation or the facts are arranged in an order which does not plainly suggest the actual order of evolution. In this work an attempt is made to distribute the known facts in such succession that they do present, as far as possible, the real chronological development of human culture. The most primitive fragments of our race are rigorously separated from higher tribes, and the stage of religious development at which they linger is very carefully determined. In the selection of these primitive peoples the teaching of modern anthropology is closely followed, and many tribes which are usually quoted as primitive are withheld until a later stage. By this procedure a view of the origin of religion is reached which differs from that presented in the majority of recent works on the subject.

Various groups of peoples at succeeding stages of culture are then studied, and an attempt is made to determine the development of the religious sentiment, or belief or practice, from the germ which the primitive level affords. But an encyclopædia, or a work reaching the dimensions of an encyclopædia, would be required if one sought to arrange all the peoples of the earth in this evolutionary

order, and the author has to be content to pursue the subject in the form of an essay or sketch which at least outlines the real course of development. For this purpose separate regions of the earth have been chosen, and the author has sought to show how, from the primitive level which generally lingers in a few backward peoples of each region, the religious belief and practice have naturally developed until they reach the form in which we find them in the civilization which dominates the region. Thus for Asia and America the aim is to show how the primitive religion grew into the elaborate cults of China and India, Mexico and Japan.

For Europe and nearer Asia the streams are followed with special regard to their ultimate union in the river of Christian tradition. That Christianity is but the latest natural development of the evolving religious sentiment hardly an authority on the subject would now question; but few care to arrange the material of comparative religion so as to give prominence to this culminating fact of the inquiry, Here again the author sketches what he believes to be the actual order of development, and follows the method which he deems more scientific. The work is substantially a compilation of facts from the best original authorities on each people; the author claims only the merit of arranging them in a more natural and more instructive order than is usually done. The authorities are quoted in their respective places, and need not be gathered into an imposing bibliography.

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## CHAPTER I

### THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION

IN the year 384 there occurred one of the last attempts of the old Roman religion to stem the advance of Christianity. For fifty years the leading Romans had seen their life invaded increasingly by the new religion. The Emperors were now Christian, and, though they rarely lived at Rome, it was felt that the path to their favour lay through the Christian Church. The more sober and more cultivated of the Romans saw with regret the passing of their old gods. Certainly they believed no longer in the childish legends of the adventures of Jupiter and Venus; nor had they any vestige of the belief of their fathers, that the happiness of a home depended upon due respect for its Lares and Penates, and the welfare of the State upon the worship of the greater gods. If they believed at all in gods, they followed either Epicurus, who lightly placed these thin and disputable shades in a remote region of space and said that they were entirely indifferent to man's affairs, or Plato, who saw one great invisible spirit brokenly reflected, as the setting sun is upon the western clouds, in all the idols and legends of the people.

But men said—we understand it well, for many

say just the same thing to-day—that the Roman State was irreplaceably built upon the old religion, and would fall into ruin if that foundation were removed. In the year 384, therefore, when a fresh encroachment upon the old religion was contemplated, the Roman Senators sent their most distinguished orator, Symmachus, to Milan to plead for the gods. Do not ask where Symmachus thought the thunderbolts of Jupiter were that he should be compelled to use his poor human eloquence to prevent the banishment of the god. Once more, in our time, the heavens are silent, while thousands of tongues and pens plead for the retention of deity. Symmachus wrote and delivered a magnificent oration. Round the boy-Emperor Valentinian, who must have understood very little of it, were grave statesmen and bronzed soldiers who listened to, and seemed to favour, the plea. But behind the throne of the fourteen-year-old Emperor was St. Ambrose, the greatest Christian leader since Paul; and in a short time the answer of Ambrose circulated through Italy and extinguished the last hope of the Pagans.

It was a remarkable answer. Fifty years ago the Christian Churches were confronted with what is called the doctrine of evolution, and from London to Moscow, from New York to San Francisco, they execrated and ridiculed it. A few scientific men fought for the truth, and one by one the various departments of nature passed under the dominion of the new ruler. The stars had been gradually formed out of loose clouds of cosmic dust; the rocks had been compacted during millions of years out of

this ingathered material; the animals and plants had slowly ascended a vast scale of organization; man himself—it was at last irresistibly shown—was but the present flower of that age-long development. But when scholars went on to claim that man's beliefs and institutions had been similarly evolved, and not communicated from another world, the storm of opposition rose to a gale.

And during all these years there was, unread by any, in the Migne collection of the writings of the Christian Fathers the famous argument by which Ambrose had silenced the Pagans in the year 384. It was, in effect, the evolutionary argument. It was an appeal against conservatism to the constant changefulness and progress of nature. Ambrose looked round the world for what we should call, in modern language, the laws of nature, and he found that the supreme law was change. Was religion alone, he asked, to be an exception to the law? Were they to cling to old rites and legends when the voice of nature on every side spoke of change, advance, the death of the old, the birth of the new? Ambrose won; and Europe, ever since, has forgotten his argument and adopted that of Symmachus and the Pagans.

The rhetorical argument of Ambrose has now become a science or a philosophy. The most comprehensive, the most conspicuous, the most illuminating law of nature is evolution. From the atom of matter to the star, from the little Alga swimming in the pond to the orchid, from the worm to the human being, from Niagara Gorge to the Alps, from the corroboree

of a group of Australian savages to a symphony, from the primitive life of a community of Bushmen to the civilization of the United States—all was evolved. Whether things were evolved quite gradually or by spurts, whether natural selection had a larger or smaller part in the process—in other words, whether the correct way to conceive the evolution is Lamarckism or Darwinism or Weismannism or Mendelism—men may dispute; but the fact and universality of evolution none dispute. Religion falls under the law. It was evolved.

So far, again, there is no dispute. The various religions or religious sects which raise their temples among us to-day, or are preserved in the temple ruins and sacred books of yesterday, were evolved. The aim of the science of comparative religion to-day is to arrange them all in one vast evolutionary family; to trace their common roots in the mind of primitive man, and show how each religion of savage tribe, or of present or past civilization, is a branch of the great tree.

Here, naturally, there arise the difficulties and disputes which cloud every science in its infancy. We have, in the first place, the difficulty of describing early stages which belong to a remote period of the past. In a great measure the savages of to-day, who are the primitive men of yesterday, preserve these stages for us. But the very earliest stages or germs of what, in the broadest sense, is called religion belong to a phase of human development which is preserved in no living race of men. Between the highest animals and the lowest existing



human beings is a deep cleft. Once the chalk-cliffs of France were continuous with those of England. During the lifetime of humanity the sea has severed them, and it is only by the use of the scientific imagination that we can confidently reunite them. So it is with man and the highest of the lower animals. The various phases of earliest human development, the hundreds of thousands of years of evolution which lie between the man-like ape of the Miocene period and the ape-like man of the Old Stone Age (who survives in our lowest savages), are dissolved and buried in the mould of the earth. It was in that lost world that religion was born, and we will take especial pains, in the early chapters of this work, to reconstruct the process of development.

But no one now doubts that it was a natural and gradual development. For a time there were those who pleaded for a primitive revelation. The situation was just a repetition of what it had been in the days of Darwin and Huxley. When theologians were convinced that there had been evolution, they still maintained that the *first* low forms of life had been created. No scientific authority in the world now admits that; and our religious writers are being tardily awakened to the humour of their pitting their opinions on a question of knowledge of nature against the united authority of scientific men. In the same way they pleaded that the first germs of religion were divinely implanted in the soil of the human mind. And the scientific authority on religion smiles and says: "I don't see the need." We shall see these crude primitive ideas in the next chapter,

and we shall understand the smile. It is, in fact, now generally admitted by religious writers that primitive forms of religion were evolved.

In tracing the development of these primitive religious forms we shall also have the answer to those who would ascribe to man a special "religious sense" or "religious faculty." The idea of "faculties" is not in favour in modern psychology. What used to be called faculties are so many aspects or special applications of the mind. If this "religious sense" means that the human mind only, as distinct from the dog-mind or ape-mind, is capable of constructing religious ideas, we agree. But it is, we shall see, no more remarkable than the political sense, the moral sense, or the æsthetic sense. If any person is disposed to see any particular meaning in the fact that these are all "spiritual" powers, we may remind him that man's distinction is just as marked on the mechanical side. These are merely so many different aspects or measures of his general mental superiority to the lower animals. We shall see that this general superiority in intelligence is enough to account for the origin of primitive religious ideas.

If it be urged that there is at least some peculiar significance in the fact that all known peoples have religious ideas, we must conceive precisely what we mean. What is religion? In the appendix to Professor Leuba's *Psychological Study of Religion* there are fifty different, and generally contradictory, definitions of religion. Fifty others might be added to the collection. These definitions are in many

cases framed by men who start with the assumption that all men have religion, and they therefore make their definitions vague enough to embrace the ideas or practices of what they understand to be the lowest specimens of humanity known to the anthropologist. We shall see, however, that in nearly every case these writers have failed to study the really lowest peoples known to us, and their assurance that all peoples have religion, in their sense of the word, is inaccurate.

I have just mentioned the admirable work of Professor Leuba, a liberal and conscientious writer on religion, and I am tempted to illustrate my point from it. "It is now generally conceded," Professor Leuba says (p. 76), "that, as one approaches the original conditions of the race, religious practices dwindle away, while magical behaviour is everywhere in evidence." He at once, as most writers would do, quotes the Australian aborigines. But we shall in the next chapter consider a half-dozen peoples who are culturally lower than the Australians, and admittedly nearer to the original conditions of the race; and we shall find that some of them at least are not acquainted with magical behaviour. Professor Leuba is more seriously mistaken, and his error is the more regrettable in that it will serve the purpose of a certain type of religious controversialist with whom he is not in sympathy, when he goes on to claim that even the lowest known peoples believe in some kind of a God. He says:—

It is an old opinion that even the lowest savage entertains a belief in a Supreme Being, however

dimly conceived and little revered.....Although this opinion suffered temporary discredit from the discovery that in several instances the alleged monotheistic beliefs really proceeded from the teaching of missionaries, recent anthropological researches furnish sufficient evidence to warrant a return to this view.<sup>1</sup>

He instances, as is usual, Australia, Africa, and Melanesia, where we do not touch the lowest human level; and he concludes with the dogmatic statement that "there exists among the most primitive peoples now living the notion of a great god high above all others, to whom is usually assigned the function of creator."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Jevons, Dr. Menzies, and other writers on comparative religion make the same statement with less disinterestedness, but I prefer to illustrate the point from so impartial a writer as Professor Leuba. The statement is inaccurate. The facts in regard to Australian belief we shall see later, but at least in the case of such peoples as the wild Veddahs and several others there is no belief in a Supreme Being of any kind whatever, as will be shown in the next chapter. Therefore, if religion is defined to mean a belief in or worship of gods, in the most liberal sense of the word, it is untrue that all peoples have a religion. If by religion is meant some sort of cult of or dependence upon "spirits," there are a few peoples who must be described as destitute of it. If it is reduced to a belief in a vague impersonal

<sup>1</sup> P. 100.

<sup>2</sup> P. 103.



power which pervades nature, like the *mana* of the Melanesians, there are many peoples who have no religion. If, in fine, the definition of religion is narrowed to a belief that a man does not cease to exist at the moment which we call death, we shall still find it impossible to assert positively that all peoples have religion; we shall touch a grade of intelligence so low and hazy that it has never considered the question, and does not assert the survival of man.

There is, in a word, a small group of very lowly peoples who are rarely noticed even by modern writers on the beliefs of primitive peoples, yet they are of supreme importance in this connection. I propose therefore to state the facts concerning what is called their "religion" fully and plainly before entering upon any speculation concerning the origin of religion, or attempting to give any definition of it. Indeed, I am not interested in the verbal quibble whether the lowest savages have religious ideas or believe in gods. Whatever such childlike specimens of our race believe is wrong, and it is merely perplexing to find religious writers of our time straining to prove that they have some broad kinship in ideas with the Yahgan or the Botocudo. The relation of the beliefs and practices of these lowest peoples to the question of the evolution of religion is a very different and much more important matter, and the next chapter will be entirely devoted to stating the facts. As a rule, the writer on the evolution of religion either starts with a theory and selects his facts to support it,

or he starts with a collection of facts taken from peoples at very different levels of culture, and quite commonly takes a secondary or even tertiary level of religious development to be the lowest known to us. We shall find a set of facts below the starting-point of nearly all these writers, and we will postpone theory and definition until we have studied them.

We shall then take the facts relating to a secondary level—the Australians, Melanesians, Africans, and so on—which are generally, and improperly, made the starting point, instead of the second phase, of discussion. Here gods and priests and sacred places and ritual, of dim and grotesque shapes, begin to arise. We must attempt to trace the continuity of these things from the crude earlier level, and follow it into the rich variety of religious forms which will succeed. At this stage we have no difference of opinion in principle. All admit that savage religions represent various stages of development of the primordial germs, or forms directed and distorted by the special environment of the tribes among whom we find them to-day.

Nor is there any fundamental difference of opinion until we reach the stage where the historic religions, or the beliefs and practices of civilized peoples, arise. Here again we have a parallel to the controversy about biological evolution. The theologian once claimed that the first germs of religion, like the first germs of life, were created. Few informed theologians would now claim this, but they hold their position more obstinately at the other end of

the evolutionary scale. In effect, they now generally say that every form of religion was evolved except their own. The Hebrew rabbi will generously grant that all creeds except the Hebrew creed represent a slow and blundering human development; that even Christianity is but a mass of material borrowed from Judaism and other religions, and moulded into a new shape in the course of the first century. But *his* creed was revealed to man. The Christian theologian will now usually admit that Judaism is a product of evolution, but will emphatically assert that *his* creed is the grand exception to the law of human development. The Mohammedan teacher in an Egyptian or Hindu college, through whose windows there now come the echoes of European teaching, protests that *his* creed is the only genuine exception to the law of natural development. And if this doctrine of evolution were presented to a Parsee or Brahmanic teacher of India, a lama of Thibet, or the head of a Buddhist monastery in China, he would, with the same impressive accent of conviction, assure you that it was immaterial to him whether you ascribed all other religions in the world to the devil or to evolution, but *his* creed was revealed.

We have to see how each of these historic religions, including Christianity, evolved from the nebula of primitive religion. Here we have a second general defect of the literature on the subject. As soon as it approaches the crowning part of its work, the evolution of the religion which to-day fills the civilized world and is therefore entitled to especial

attention, it becomes timid and evasive. We shall gladly notice the few writers who frankly discuss the question, but they are few. It is probable that at least nine out of ten of the modern writers on the evolution of religion or comparative religion have not the least sympathy with the belief that there is anything "revealed" in Christianity. But they avail themselves of the fiction of the neutrality of science, and they generally draw up a scheme of the evolution of religion in such fashion that a Christian reader may continue to believe that his creed does not fall under the comprehensive law.

Here the facts will be gathered and stated with entire candour. There was no arrest or diversion or miraculous increase of the stream of religious development nineteen hundred years ago. It flows quite evenly through the records of the first century B.C. and the first century A.D. One cannot even say that at this point a branch of the great stream entered rapids and underwent a remarkable natural transformation of its character. It is owing only to the timidity of historians and writers on comparative religion that this idea is still so widely held. The few centuries before and after Christ—the period of the Greek and Roman civilizations—were, from circumstances which we will consider, peculiarly fruitful in new religious developments. Many religions as novel and as elevated in sentiment as Christianity arose. They proselytized and thrived equally in the Græco-Roman Empire. Then, from further circumstances which we will consider, Christianity obtained a privileged position,

and destroyed even the very records of its rivals. Thus a fiction of unique distinction and miraculous growth was created in the mind of Europe: a modern history is far less courageous in assailing that fiction than was history in the derided days of the Georges and Victoria. Here there is no reason for reticence.

Closely connected with this is the question of the relation of the evolutionary account of religion to the validity of religious beliefs. The few writers who venture to include Christianity in their evolutionary scheme hasten to protest, as a rule, that they are not thereby raising any prejudice against the truth of Christian doctrines. Almost all writers on this subject declare at the outset that they must not be understood to question the validity of the beliefs and practices they describe. One soon finds that this reserve has limits. The legends and practices of uncivilized peoples, and even of the Greeks and Egyptians, they do not for a moment profess to regard as possibly valid; nor do they bow very reverently before the tenets of Taoism, Buddhism, or Mohammedanism. It is the Christian doctrines and the fundamental doctrines of all religion which they refuse to judge. The work of science is, they say, description, not the appreciation of values.

In this sense the present work is not scientific. It is entirely based upon research in the recognized authorities for each religion which is noticed, and the author is bold enough to claim that the material thus gathered is arranged more scientifically, for the purpose of deduction, than in nine out of ten of the

academic works on the subject. But he does not consider himself bound by any law or custom of neutrality, and he does believe that the majority of readers are at least as deeply interested in the question of the truth of religion as in the question of the development of religious beliefs and practices. He is even convinced that the evolution of religion throws much light upon the validity of religion, and a consideration of this may terminate the introductory chapter.

It is at once apparent that a complete belief in the evolution of religion is inconsistent with the formal teaching of every branch of the Christian Church and the emphatic conviction of nine out of ten, if not forty-nine out of fifty, Christians. If Christianity was evolved from pre-existing religious material, the Christian claim of revelation and supernatural action falls. If Christ was merely a man who by—if you please—his moral genius raised the religion of his time and country to a higher level, the official creed of the Christian Churches and the belief of the overwhelming majority of Christians are inaccurate. Now I doubt if one in ten of our modern authorities on the subject of comparative religion—Frazer, Lang, Roth, Hartland, Crawley, Marett, Farnell, Tiele, Preuss, Reinach, Loisy, Marillier, King, Leuba, Brinton, Toy, Achelis, Roskoff, D'Alviella, Wundt, Réville, Jevons, and the innumerable writers on special religions—believes that there is anything revealed or supernatural in Christianity. Possibly the whole of the above writers with one exception would say that the doctrine of the “uniquism”—

as my friend Bishop W. M. Brown puts it—of Christianity has been abandoned. It has, no doubt, been abandoned by the well-informed few in the Churches, but it is certainly still cherished by the overwhelming mass of the laity and the great majority of the clergy, higher and lower.

On that account it seems inadvisable to slur over this most material point of the evolutionary scheme; to imply, or timidly suggest, that the Christian religion is a natural branch of the great family of religions, but give the point so little prominence that the majority of readers will continue to cherish an illusion which the science of comparative religion entirely discredits. The claim of popular Christian writers on behalf of their religion is as obsolete and parochial as the claim, which many of them still press, that man's mind was not evolved from the mind of a lower animal. The one is just as decisively discredited by modern culture as the other. And in an age which confronts such strenuous tasks as ours does, an age in which men must, if they would survive, substitute realities for phrases, it seems a pity to prolong the life of popular illusions by timid compromise or prudent evasiveness.

The plan of this work is therefore revealed. Its chief ambition is to throw further light on the origin of religion, and to make plainer to the general reader how all the historic religions, including Christianity, were evolved out of the cruder material of earlier religions. Within the limits which are imposed much of the work must be done sketchily.



There is not the least pretence of making an exhaustive study of each phase or aspect of religion, or each tribal or national embodiment of the religious sentiment. But special care will be given to the study of the earliest and most primitive traces or rudiments of religion, and to the evolution of Christianity in particular. The vast world of developing forms which lies between those two extremes will be treated only in so far as it is necessary in order to give the reader a synoptic view of the religions of the world as so many branches, in different stages of development, of one great tree.

Whether the result will afford the reader any positive light on the validity of religious beliefs may be left to his experience. Many people cannot survey this procession of religions through the ages without feeling that it is, in the words of Professor Sergi, "a pathological phenomenon," a diseased growth parasitical upon man's vitality. That impression cannot be sanctioned as a conviction until it is checked by a severe audit of the accounts of religion; an impartial estimation of the benefits it has conferred on man in strict relation to the energies and resources put at its disposal by man. This kind of social bookkeeping cannot be attempted here. It belongs to history. Therefore I do not venture here to say whether this portentous phenomenon of religion, dawning in the mind of primitive man and growing until it fills and enthrals the world, has been worth while. Some day, when comparative religion and history have completed

their research and cast off the restraints which a prevailing creed imposes upon them, the account will be made. I envy the social historian who will have before him the mighty ledger, representing a hundred thousand years of human life, at the close of which he can register the great verdict.

But if the use of religion is not here in question, the question of its truth is not entirely excluded. We shall find that in the early stages religious ideas and practices were unquestionably unsound in themselves and based upon unsound reasons. The unsoundness of the reasoning of a Hottentot or a Kaffir does not, of course, bear any relation to the soundness or unsoundness of the reasoning of a Plato or an Augustine. But the study of the development suggests one material point. There came, comparatively soon, a stage in which a special caste of men—medicine-men, wizards, or priests—was set aside and supported for religious purposes. It became in time the vital interest of a powerful and rich organization in every country that the beliefs should be maintained; and through the ignorant and superstitious masses these priests were usually able to make life very uncomfortable for sceptics like Socrates, Christ, or Giordano Bruno.

In the circumstances the sceptically-minded cast about for reasons which would accommodate their consciences to the substance of the received traditions. They were ethically and socially useful. They inspired philanthropy. They met an eternal need of human nature. They soothed the afflicted. They had a nucleus of truth. And so on. Thus

did men speak in ancient Athens and Rome; and thus do they speak to-day. When the popular beliefs at length disappeared, these diplomatic considerations became the philosophic base of a new religion. In short, a niche for an idol had been constructed in the economy of human life, and there were powerful bodies interested in seeing that the niche was never left empty. There were also philanthropists. We remember how the wicked Heine explained the philosopher Kant's progress from his early promise of Agnosticism to his later Theism. He had brought the idol down in ruins in his study. Then he found his aged servant Lampe weeping over the ruins of his god, and, from kindly feeling, he put the fragments together again and provided a new pedestal.

It cannot be doubted that this aspect of the growth of higher religions begets a sceptical temper. Twenty educated men believe in twenty different gods; and of twenty who believe in the same god the arguments are entirely different and often contradictory. The evidence changes in each generation; the god does not. One is disposed to think that the pressure is in the environment. Religion exists, so we must find reasons why it ought to exist. The real reasons why it exists are in this story of religious evolution which I propose to tell. But these considerations will arise more freely when the story is told, and may be postponed.

## CHAPTER II

### THE EARLIEST TRACES OF RELIGION

FROM passing remarks in the previous chapter the reader will have gathered that I propose a new procedure in investigating the origin of religion. It is advisable to state at once the nature or the measure of this new departure. I propose no new method, but a stricter use of the method which has been employed in the large literature of the subject throughout our generation. That method is to study the religion of primitive peoples and assume that the crude religious forms we find among them are survivals of man's first blundering experiments in religion. The defect of most of the literature of the subject is, it seems to me, that the writers do not begin with the earliest and most primitive peoples, and so they quote comparatively advanced developments as the nearest clues we can get to the religion of primitive man. They are not, as a rule, anthropologists, and they have not paid strict attention to the cultural tests by means of which the anthropologist arranges peoples according to their degree of primitiveness. I think it is possible to correct this.

The inexperienced public, for whom I write, may need to be reminded of, or taught, the reasons why we

attach so much importance to the beliefs or practices of the lowest—I will not say savages, for they are as a rule not savage—the lowest peoples. There is, as I said, in our records of the process of life-development on this globe a comparatively broad gap between the Miocene man-like ape and the earliest known ape-like man. Even when we begin to find the bones and implements of early man we have, naturally, no trace of his ideas. His skull is so imperfectly developed, the intelligence he bestows upon the making of the earliest implements is so feeble, his body is of such a nature, that we know he was developed from some branch of the ape-world. But the transitional forms have perished, as such forms generally do, and there remain to-day only the man-like ape, which roughly represents his Miocene ancestor, and the fully developed man. A lost world lies between the two.

We have, however, some traces of this world. Towards the end of the Old Stone Age man began to draw and paint, and these projections of his ideas are found to-day in the caverns of Spain and southern France. Unhappily we find here nothing that can confidently be used in the present study. Certain pebbles have been found the marks on which are interpreted by some as having a magical or religious significance. This is very uncertain, and I ignore the matter. We have, further, the claim that even the earliest men of whom we have trace buried their dead, and this seems to imply a belief in continuance after death. Writers on our subject seem to have overlooked this evidence, though

Professor Keith claims that 400,000 years ago a race of men more primitive than any now living buried its dead.<sup>1</sup> There is, however, so much dispute about these early skeletons and their burial that I again ignore the claim. Nor do I think, as some writers on the subject do, that observation of the child helps us much. The child in its development certainly passes through the degrees of intelligence through which our ancestors ascended, but the environment is so different that it is difficult to distinguish between the native working of the child-mind and the sprouting of imparted ideas.

The surest aid is obtained from the lowly races of to-day. Man of the Old Stone Age is not dead. He lives in large numbers of peoples to-day. In some cases these peoples have been so far shielded from inoculation with the ideas of later and more advanced races that they represent to us how man lived a hundred, possibly two hundred, thousand years ago. It is probable that humanity was developed at one centre, and this seems, on present evidence, to have been in the western part of the Indian Ocean, where there was then more dry land than there now is. From that centre man wandered in every direction, and the successive waves of migration represented successive levels of culture. In the more thickly populated parts he made progress. As each new race in turn overstocked its region, it spread; and in front of it were driven, to

<sup>1</sup> *The Antiquity of Man*, p. 185. The skeleton in question (Galley Hill) is probably later than Professor Keith represents.

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the ends of the earth, the representatives of the earlier and cruder race.

Let me give an illustration from astronomy. At a certain point in the sky are five or six stars, close together, which we know as the Pleiades. Our instruments disclose that they are the brighter members of a group of several thousand stars which we regard as the crystallization of a very large nebula. Now, when we take a long-exposure photograph of the group, we find wisps and streamers and clouds of the original nebular material lying between the stars on every side. The lower races of our time are the remains of the nebular material out of which the civilizations of to-day have crystallized.

It is supremely important in such a study as that on which we are engaged to arrange these lowly peoples in their proper order. This is done by studying the general features of their culture—their implements, language, clothing, ornaments, houses, legends, diet, industries, and so on. A people that has no tribal organization, no permanent homes or clothing (having regard to climate), no agriculture, only rough stone or wooden weapons, few or no legends, and a language which hardly or not at all expresses abstract ideas, is a little changed remnant of the men of the middle or early Old Stone Age. Such are the peoples I am about to take. They are recognized in anthropology as the lowest existing peoples. At the next level, which is that of the Australians and purer Melanesians, we still have stone weapons, little or no clothing and homes,



perhaps no agriculture, and a very imperfect tongue ; but the weapons and language and customs are higher, and there are better methods of hunting, tribal organizations, complex marriages, richer legends, and so on. At a third level we get settled agriculture, the use of metal, etc., as in Africa. In studying human development we must pay stricter attention than is usually given to these grades of general culture.

It is of interest also to glance at the position on the map of these lowly peoples whom I consider in this chapter. They are the Veddahs of Ceylon, the Andamanese Islanders, the Aetas of the Philippine Islands, the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, the Tasmanians, the Bushmen of South Africa, the Yahgans of Tierra del Fuego, and certain peoples in the interior of South America. One sees at a glance that they are just in such positions (islands, or the tips or forest-interiors of continents) as we should expect to find sheltering fragments of the earlier races of men. Except where they have found refuge in an island like Ceylon, they were driven onward and outward by the advancing later races, with better weapons and more powerful physique, to the ends of the earth. There, happily for science, they have preserved the features of life in various phases of the Old Stone Age until our time.

It will, however, be understood that the isolation of these peoples is far from complete. They have in every case long been in partial contact with higher races. They seem to have experienced little or no

internal development, which is the usual price of isolation ; but we have to watch carefully for foreign importations in their ideas. Once I looked down from the crest of the hills upon the western coast of the South Island of New Zealand. The western slopes, with their millions of tree-ferns and rich variety of mosses, seemed to be a section of the ancient Coal Forests, fenced off and preserved for a later generation. The eastern slopes and the country beyond were rich with plants and flowers which had, in seed, come on the wind and wave from the Pacific. Even the western slopes of the hills were invaded. So in the human world. You will find a native to-day tipping his arrow with a bit of glass from a bottle of European make. If you look closely, you may discover that he long ago tipped his primitive belief with a showy fragment from some neighbouring higher tribe, or, later, some Christian missionary.

In the case of the people I take first, the Veddahs, we have ample illustrations of this; yet we have also the good fortune to possess an exceptionally careful and discriminating study of the people, and it is remarkable how little the result is taken into account by speculators on the origin of religion. The Veddahs wreck nearly every generalization about the religion of primitive folk. They have not only no gods and no cult, but they do not clearly practise magic, and they have no definite belief in a life after death and no conception of an impersonal power pervading nature.

There are only between two and three thousand

Veddahs left in the island of Ceylon, and very few of them have a pure culture. The island is relatively near the probable cradle of the human race, and it is natural to find representatives of quite early man sheltering in it. But higher tribes have been attracted to the beautiful and fruitful island, and its original population has been absorbed, destroyed, or driven to the solitudes. The greater part of the surviving few have been "civilized," and most of the others have contracted Tamil or Cinghalese ideas against which we must be on our guard. But there remain a few "wild Veddahs," almost untainted by foreign ideas; and they are the most interesting people in the world from our present point of view. Two able and conscientious German students, Paul and Fritz Sarasin, undertook an expedition to Ceylon a few decades ago, and the third volume of their superb work, *Ergebnisse naturwissenschaftlichen Forschungen auf Ceylon* (1887-93), provides the most valuable, and the least quoted, material on primitive religion.

The pure Veddahs are taller than most of the primitive peoples we have to study. They average about 4 feet 11 inches in height, and their cranial capacity (1,280 cubic centimeters) must therefore be regarded as one of the lowest known. Their culture is proportionately simple. They have no agriculture, no tribal organization, no chiefs, no express rules of morals. They have the strict and simple monogamy (without conceiving a *law* in such matters) of earliest man. Their only homes are caves or thin screens of foliage; they are usually naked; and their language

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is of so rudimentary a description that it contains no numeral beyond one. Their weapons (axes, long bows, and iron-tipped arrows of fine make) are more advanced than the rest of their culture, but the metal tip betrays their indebtedness to the higher race. It also puts us on our guard in regard to their religion. In the sixteenth century most of them were incorporated in a Cinghalese kingdom, and few have escaped its influence.

The brothers Sarasin concluded that they have no religion and no definite practice of magic. They regard it as certain—and the point is not disputed—that the Veddahs did not originally bury their dead but probably put over the body a few branches of trees and placed a stone upon its chest. They avoid the spot for years afterwards, and we shall find this common practice clearly taking a superstitious form in later peoples; but, though the Sarasins do not assent to this, it seems to me that the putrefaction of the body is a sufficient explanation. When they eventually return to the cave, they carelessly and callously fling out the bones. The Sarasins suggest that the covering of the corpse with trees and a stone is to prevent the soul leaving the body, but this does not seem consistent with what follows, and the Veddahs themselves know no explanation.

Every Veddah speaks of the dead as a *yaka* (plural *yaku*), and the Sarasins constantly translate this “spirit” and represent the Veddah as believing that he consists of “soul and body.” They add, however, that “the wild Veddahs have either no or a very vague idea of the continued life of the soul

at the place where he died, and they make no offering to his *manes*.”<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority of the Veddahs do offer rice and other food to the *yaku*; but this practice, we are told, they have borrowed from the Cinghalese. Of the purer Veddahs whom the authors questioned about their religion, half answered that they never offered any gifts or attentions to the *yaku*, and the other half answered, laughing, that they “followed the religion of the Tamils” and offered rice to the *yaku*. Man after man, of both wild and semi-civilized Veddahs, said, when asked if a man’s *yaka* lived on, that they did not know; they had never considered the matter; they offered rice only, if they offered it at all, in memory of their dead friends. Unless one prefers the fantastic hypothesis that scepticism has set in among this lowest of peoples, we must acknowledge that here we reach a stratum of humanity which has no native belief in man’s duality or survival. When we are further told that *yaka* is a slightly modified Cinghalese word, we are confirmed in this theory. The purest Veddahs do not know that man has a double. To them *yaka* seems to mean only a dead man.

In regard to nature-worship they are just as primitive. They show a rudimentary awe of the sun and moon—especially the moon—but where this approaches a cult the Sarasins discover Indian influence. They have no idea whatever of an impersonal force. The more or less magical chants

<sup>1</sup> Vol. iii, p. 498.

which some use are Tamil, and the supposed "spells" which pure Veddahs use against wild beasts are mere yells to frighten them. The Seligmanns (whom I quote presently) fortunately add that the only beast they have to fear is a species of bear which avoids man (and so needs little intimidation), and that the "charm" is merely a shriek of such a phrase as "Begone, enemy." They have, however, a regard for certain ornamental arrows which looks like magic. They dance round one of these which is stuck into the ground; they stick one into the ground when a child is born; and they afterwards frequently leave this near the babe as if to protect it. But, since they say that they have no more reason than custom for this, we can see no clear magical or religious significance in it. Let us say that it is the germ of magic.

Superficially we seem to have a quite different account of the Veddahs in the more recent volume of Professor and Mrs. Seligmann, *The Veddahs* (1911). Here the cult of the spirits of the dead, in the form of offering them rice and coconut milk, is represented as the definite religion of the Veddahs. We are told that they avoid the spot where a man died because they fear the *yaku* will throw stones at them; that every family honours its *yaku* and offers food to them; that hired shamans lead them in chanting invocations to their *yaku*; that the *yaku* abound on every side and may cause disease, and that there is among them a great *yaka*, Kande Yaka, "Lord of the Dead," to whom they pay especial veneration. Of magic the Seligmanns find

no trace except an old practice of killing a man and thereafter carrying about a bit of his liver, with the vague idea that it increases their strength.

But the Seligmanns are here speaking of the majority of the Veddahs, and, as they warn us, there are few Veddahs of pure native culture left to-day. They obviously regard the cult of the *yaku* as a strictly Veddah development, but at times they touch that stratum of vague and more rudimentary ideas in which, I have suggested, we have the original culture. They met old men who would not admit that ordinary folk became *yaku* at death. Particularly gifted Veddahs might, but not the common run. This is totally inconsistent with the general cult of the dead; the general belief that a man's *yaka* goes after death to ask a certain great *yaka* in the vague other-world if he may accept offerings. When we remember that rice and the coconut were not known originally to the Veddahs, and that many of them to-day offer nothing whatever to *yaku*, we return to the position in which the Sarasins left us. The untainted Veddahs have no idea of man's survival. They do not understand the word *yaka*, which they have adopted. Their Kande Yaka is regarded by some authorities as a modification of the Cinghalese god Scanda, but is in any case—according to their persistent statements—merely a clever Veddah of “many generations ago” whom the less pure Veddahs have put upon the highroad to deity. When we confine our attention to the few surviving pure Veddahs we get a consistent message. They do not know if anything



of a man survives death; in other words, it is not their tradition. They do not honour the dead; that is "the Tamil religion." They know nothing of spirits, or *mana*; and they do not worship sun or moon.

I take next the Tasmanians, who have long been represented as the lowest known specimens of the human race, though the reader will notice that they are, or were, scarcely as primitive as the wild Veddahs. Like the Veddahs, they are a part of one of the early waves of human distribution, though apparently not the same wave. From the cradle of the race, in or near the Indian Ocean, they wandered southward into the continent of Australia. Upon them in the course of time fell the second wave of distribution, the somewhat more advanced blacks of Australia; and the survivors of the more primitive people took refuge in the south-eastern projection of the continent. The sea then cut off this territory, forming of it the island of Tasmania; and the simple people were thus preserved in isolation and unprogressiveness until the Europeans came to exterminate them. They ceased to exist half a century ago.

It is very unfortunate that the Tasmanians were extinguished before any competent authority had studied their remarkable life. Their skulls show an extremely low development of brain, and their broad noses, large lips, and small retreating chins betrayed their lowly type. Their language was singularly elementary. They had no words to express abstract ideas—a point that may be commended to the philosophers who place the distinction of man in the

possession of abstract ideas—and their speech was so imperfect that they are said to have found it difficult to converse with each other when the sun sank. During the day gesture and facial movement assisted the crude words. They were habitually naked, in the temperate clime of Tasmania, though many wore skins in winter. They had fire-producing sticks, but seem to have borrowed these from the Australians. They had no tribes, no chiefs, no totems, no agriculture, no metals, no domestic animals, no villages, and only a few crude huts or breakwinds to protect them from the occasional cold of the Tasmanian winter. Having myself felt the keen southern winds that at times sweep over Tasmania, I should say that their backwardness in clothing, housing, and the use of fire is as primitive a feature as the concreteness of their speech. Their stone weapons were so crude that some have put them in the Eolithic (or Earliest Stone) Age.

Since this primitive people vanished in the very infancy of anthropology, we have no careful study such as the Sarasins have made of the Veddahs. There is, however, a conscientious, if not entirely scientific, account of their beliefs and practices in J. Bonwick's *Daily Life and Origin of the Tasmanians* (1870), and almost all the references to them—a weird and contradictory mass—are gathered together in Mr. H. Ling Roth's *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (2nd ed., 1899). Other writers often confuse the Tasmanians and Australians, and they must be read carefully.

Mr. Bonwick quotes with approval the verdict of

the first Bishop of Tasmania, Dr. Nixon. "No trace can be found," the prelate says, "of any religious usage, or even sentiment, among them, unless indeed we may call by that name the dread of a malignant and destructive spirit which seems to have been their predominant, if not their only, feeling on the subject." Missionaries are not usually prone to state that tribes have no religion, and this may seem a further case that general writers on religion have overlooked; but the dread of a malignant spirit is now fully admitted to be a religious sentiment, and we must examine the facts. I put together the statements of Bonwick, who knew the Tasmanians well, and the statements of other writers which Mr. Ling Roth, a good anthropologist, regards as reliable.

From these it is clear that the Tasmanians had fairly advanced magical practices and religious beliefs. They had wizards or medicine-men, but no priests or sacred places; they believed intensely in the spirits of the dead, but had nothing approaching to gods or idols; they regarded the sun, moon, and stars with an elementary feeling of awe, but did not venerate them. They, in fact, peopled the shadows and caves and woods of their beautiful island with spirits, and their whole life was overcast by a concern about the malignancy of many of these. When a man died they would spend the night by the corpse, and it is suggested that their purpose was to prevent evil spirits from stealing it. They then buried the corpse, and believed that the man's shade had gone to a better world; though in the last instance we

know that their original belief was adulterated, since they quite generally said that they became white men after death. The idea of a white man had, of course, not entered their heads until a century before. Roth warns us to distrust all that they are reported as saying about their future life.

For the inquiry we propose to make in the next chapter it is necessary to look more closely into these beliefs. We speak of their belief in "spirits," but it is hardly necessary to observe that there was nothing spiritual in their idea of what survived the grave. The word they used was "shadow," and here we have a very important clue to religious origins. The strange dark outline which followed a man when the sun shone, or the coloured double of himself which he saw in pool or stream, seems to have been the starting-point of their speculation. This lived on when the body stiffened; and it might be a malignant agency, lurking in the woods or caves by day and prowling at night, or a benignant being, as the shade of one's father was generally conceived to be. They never mentioned the dead—an Australian trait—lest the spirit should hear and resent it; and the women, when the men were away getting food, chanted in order to keep off the malignant spirits. This was the extent of their religious belief and practice.

It is now impossible to say how much of this they borrowed, as they borrowed fire, from the Australians; but we should go beyond all precedent if we assumed that they borrowed all. We may confidently regard them as having reached the belief that a man did

not wholly die, but his shade or double lived on in Tasmania and was evil or kindly, as it had been in the flesh. The spirits which filled their world at night seem to have been these shades of the dead. They were strictly personal—they were men—not an impersonal power; and there was no great spirit. They were not venerated or placated. The movements of nature seem to have inspired in them no speculation. Some have represented that they venerated the sun as a great good spirit, and appeased the moon as the great evil spirit of the night. Roth denies this, and says that the men merely chose moonlight nights for their secret dances because they dreaded the dark. They had no artificial light. It must be remembered, however, that their attitude towards the sun is constantly described as something like awe.

Their magic, which is suspiciously like that of the Australians in many respects, seems to have been a separate and non-religious development. The medicine-men were much sought, and they cured disease by twirling on a stick an oval piece of wood, or by rattling the bones of dead men. Bones and hair were prominent instruments of their magic. If they wished to destroy an enemy, they got a few of his hairs, wrapped them in fat, and set the mess before a fire to melt. These practices do not involve a belief in an impersonal power like *mana*, and are not, as such, connected with their belief in spirits.

Now let us pass to Africa. From the cradle of the race in or around the Indian Ocean an early group would soon wander into Africa, as the apes

had previously done. Later arrivals of more advanced races would drive them into the forests of the interior or towards the south. Probably we have many remnants of these earliest nomads in the central forests. The Pygmies are confidently regarded as a very primitive stock, sheltering in the forests of Central Africa. In his *Uganda Protectorate* (1902) Sir H. Johnston tells us that they have "no very clearly marked religion," but that they bury their dead in his hut, set up a crude wooden image of him, and abandon the spot. Wizards abound among them, and are especially valued as rain-makers. But in that crowded region cultures have overlapped so much that we shall do well to avoid this little people. They have borrowed the entire language of the higher blacks, and he who borrows a language borrows ideas. We will rather pass to the south of Africa, where the Bushmen have reached the last term of their long wandering.

Dr. G. McCall Theal (*Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa South of the Zambesi*, 1910) and Mr. G. W. Stow (*Native Races of South Africa*, 1905) have completed our knowledge of this lowly people. Dr. Theal thinks them related to the Negritoes of the Andaman Islands and the Philippines, whom we will take next. They stand, on the average, about 4 feet 9 inches in height, and they have the very low cranial capacity of 1,300 cubic centimeters, which is little higher than that of the Veddahs. They are generally naked, and they live in caves or under rock-shelters or mats spread on light frames. They have no cattle, no agriculture,

and no metals. Their language has no numeral higher than three. But in many respects they are superior to the other peoples I have described, though lower than the Australians and Melanesians. They have tribal divisions and chiefs, a few simple musical instruments, crude paintings, a good deal of shell and feather ornamentation, tobacco pipes and fire-sticks, a little crude pottery, and mats; and their primitive huts or frames sometimes form villages of more than a hundred families. They correspond to a late part of the Paleolithic Age, and they may be taken as the highest level of that deep stratum of religious life which we explore in this chapter.

I may begin by quoting the careful verdict on their religious beliefs and practices of Dr. Theal, the best authority:—

Everything connected with their religion—that is, their dread of something outside of and more powerful than themselves—was vague and uncertain. They could give no explanations whatever about it, and they did not all hold the same opinions on the subject. Some of them spoke indeed of a powerful being termed 'Kaang or 'Cagu, but, when questioned about him, their replies showed that they held him to be a man like themselves, though possessing charms of great power. Many are supposed to have had a vague belief in immortality, because they buried a dead man's weapons with him and laid the corpse with its face towards the rising sun, and their custom of cutting off a joint of the little finger was imagined to be due to a belief that by so doing they would secure an abundance of food in the



future life ; but probably very few of them ever gave a thought to such a matter. The wants of the present day were sufficient to occupy all their attention.<sup>1</sup>

This passage fairly appreciates the prominent traits of the Bushman's life, from our point of view, and corrects many of the statements that have been made about his religion. His 'Kaang has been quoted as justification, in his case, of the statement that all races acknowledge a Supreme Being. We learn more about it from Stow, who quotes an early missionary, Arbousset. They told Arbousset that they did not pray to their dead ancestors, but that if a man saw a caddis-worm when he went out to hunt he would observe it closely and gather from the movements of its head whether they would or would not find food. Others, however, said that they prayed to the worm, saying : "'Kaang, lead me to a male gnu. I like much to have my belly filled." Others again quoted the prayer : "O 'Cagu, O 'Cagu, are we not your children ? Do you not see our hunger ? Give us food." They added that 'Kaang was the first being and had a wife, and was the maker of all things. Where he was they did not know, though the elands knew. Some regarded him as an evil being. Others said that he was at first good, but had become irascible through fighting so many things.

We clearly have here, not a Supreme Being, but a very interesting branch of vague religious feeling in that direction. It is too often remarked that the

<sup>1</sup> Page 50.

savage will not tell his beliefs. Certainly some of the Bushmen, who think 'Kaang malignant, will not speak of him ("Talk of the devil," etc.), but others speak freely, and in their vague and contradictory statements we have a faithful reflection of their minds. The mantis (praying insect) and caddis-worm are both addressed as 'Kaang, or representatives of 'Kaang. The black man has not in his mind these fine distinctions which we make. But Stow tells us two things which we may find instructive. He reminds us, first, how the uncanny appearance of the mantis and caddis-worm would attract the imagination of the black man; and he tells us, secondly, that the purer Bushmen of the hills call 'Kaang "the great chief," and appeal to him to send rain or food. I would venture to connect these things. The Bushmen believe, we are told, that there was once a more powerful race on the earth, and some of them regard 'Kaang as of this race. They have, in other words, partly deified an ancestor, and have come vaguely to connect his power with the weird little animals of their region. Some say that to them 'Kaang is half man and half mantis.

As to his "creating all things," one has only to glance at their legends to see how a crude and childish fancy has been turned by missionaries into a belief in a supernatural being. The Bushmen are very imaginative and, in an elementary sense, poetic.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See *Specimens of Bushman Folklore* (1911), by W. H. J. Bleek and L. C. Lloyd. The legends are much simpler and cruder than many references to them represent.

They freely ascribe speech to animals, and regard them as little different from men. In the same childlike way they conceive the making of the sun and moon and stars. Those more powerful beings of the old race—not 'Kaang alone—made them. A girl one day threw some ashes into the sky, and behold the Milky Way. 'Kaang did not like the dark, and so one day he threw one of his shoes into the sky, and behold the moon. Another of these beings found a man asleep one day and threw him into the sky, and behold the sun. They have no "Supreme Being." 'Kaang is one of the more powerful of the earlier men, and some think he can influence the rain and food, so they beg him to do so.

In short, they believe in a vague way that man survives the grave. The corpse is buried ceremoniously, and the man's hut burned. His weapons are buried with him, and the lowest section of his little finger is cut off. We must not hastily conclude from the burial of the weapons that they believe he has entered another world and has use for them. We shall see instances where this is done simply out of regard for the dead. Nor must we conclude from the heap of stones put over the grave that they thus seek to restrain his spirit from wandering. There are hyenas to be taken into account. Even the practice which they have of casting a stone upon any grave they chance to pass is not necessarily an outcome of superstition ; nor is it plainly aboriginal, since it is conspicuous among their Hottentot neighbours. It is clear and agreed only that they,

or most of them, think buried men live on in some vague way, and can help or injure them; though on this point the words of Dr. Theal, the leading authority, warn us to regard the belief as extremely vague and rudimentary. It is further clear that they quite generally believe in a relatively powerful being called 'Kaang, who is certainly not a living Bushman. He is one of a class of earlier beings who seem to be their ancestors, and the legends about him have become childishly connected with two strange little animals of the country. I have referred to their uncanny appearance. I remember well the shock I experienced when I first, in mistake, put an ordinary English caddis-worm under my microscope. Dr. Theal reminds us also that these animals have protective coloration, and their apparent sudden emergence from nothingness, when one does at last perceive them at close quarters, would strike the savage as akin to the nature of his dead, who are still alive yet invisible.

Here are the germs of deism and totemism. As to magic, charms, spells, and witchcraft are highly developed among the Bushmen. In some respects the magic is closely connected with the religion. Dr. Theal, who is sceptical about their beliefs, nevertheless tells us that when they dig a water-hole they put into it a piece of meat or other food to propitiate the spirits which may dwell in the water. Mr. Stow says that the medicine-men, who cure disease by roots and charms, are generally chiefs. This is a point to be borne in mind in connection with Sir J. G. Frazer's theory of the

relation of magic to religion. But the magic generally, and the tabus which they maintain, are in themselves the purely secular superstitions which even ignorant Europeans cherish.

From the Bushmen we may return to the Indian Ocean. Dr. Theal, we saw, thinks the Bushmen related to the inhabitants of the Andaman Islands and the Aetas of the Philippine Islands. These two peoples are certainly fragments of the early Paleolithic race, but the Andaman Islands lie so obviously in the path of the age-long traffic across the Indian Ocean that we shall not expect to find among them a purely primitive culture. Let us glance at one of the most authoritative accounts of them.<sup>1</sup>

They are of the type we find common at this level of culture. The average height of the men is 4 feet 10 inches; the average cranial capacity 1,300 cubic centimeters. Like the Aetas, they are a vanishing fragment of a primitive race of Oceanic negritoes, a very early human stock. They have the same generally good moral practices, without any conception of moral law, as the other primitive peoples we study in this chapter. As Dr. Haddon says of the whole group: "They do not recognize virtue, but they do not practise vice." They have tribes, chiefs, houses, bows and arrows, pottery, the cooking and preserving of food, elaborate ceremonies, and tabus and canoes. Their fire-making apparatus

<sup>1</sup> E. H. Man, "On the Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Andaman Islands," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XII, 1883.

they seem to have borrowed. In a word, their culture is not wholly a native development.

So it seems to be with their religion. They have a quite explicit belief in the continuance of life after death. If a child dies, they bury the little body on the site of their hearth, and the mother places beside it a shell of her own milk to nourish the "spirit." With adults they bury a shell of water and the personal possessions of the dead, and they quit the spot for three months. A sudden death is ascribed to the evil spirits which haunt the sea and the jungle, and at the funeral a man attacks these with spear and arrows, shooting into the air. The soul is red. It is not the shadow, but the double of oneself, seen in the pond or stream. It passes—unless it be the soul of a murderer or great criminal—into a better life, akin to this but free from ills; and, since they go on to talk of a resurrection, we may see in this an infiltration of Christian teaching. To the same source we may trace their belief in creation, a primitive garden of bliss, and an early deluge.

It is equally impossible to disentangle the Christian and native elements in their legend of a great spirit, Puluga,<sup>1</sup> who is eternal, invisible, and all-seeing, but lives in a stone house in the sky, with a wife and children; who roars in the thunder and the storm, and makes lightning by casting burning logs from his fire; who made all things except the innumerable

<sup>1</sup> A recent authority regards Puluga and a companion power as the monsoons. See *Folklore* (Sept., 1909) and *Man* (1910, No. 2 and No. 30).

evil spirits. But there seems to be a native germ of nature-worship, though no actual worship of anything. The sun is merely the moon's wife, the stars his children; but they will not work between dawn and sunrise lest they offend the lady (the sun). The moon's anger they fear even more. As it (or he) approaches full, they extinguish all their fires, keep silent, and avoid work. He wants all their attention. All elements are, in fact, full of spirits—personal spirits—and all evils come from them.

If this evidently adulterated culture is of little use to us, the less tainted belief of the Aetas is of little more use, because it has been so slightly studied. A few thousand of these primitive negritos still linger on the fringe of the Malay population of the Philippines, and Professor D. G. Brinton (*The People of the Philippines*) summarizes for us the little that is known about them. They average about 4 feet 10 inches in height, and they have the abnormally low cranial capacity of about 1,150 cubic centimeters. They have no tribes or chief, no fixed abodes, agriculture, or pottery; but they are expert fire-makers, and have the bow and arrow. When one of them dies, they attribute the death to the "magical" power of a Tagala (Malay), and they try to kill one of the latter; but a savage's belief in the superior powers of a higher race is not necessarily a belief in magic. When the moon is full, they build a fire and dance round it; but they ask nothing of it, and Dr. Brinton is not justified in calling it their "chief deity." They have no deity. Indeed, most travellers say curtly that they have no religion. Professor F.



Blumentritt, one of the chief authorities on them, says that "practically nothing is known of their native religion."<sup>1</sup> In a lengthy account of them another authority, Mr. D. C. Worcester, finds only one trace of what might be called religion. Many of them are head-hunters, and they say in explanation that if they do not take one head a year they will incur disease, injury, or death. They bury food with the head, and Mr. Worcester suggests that this is in order to propitiate the evil spirit.<sup>2</sup> But as they live in constant touch with the Malay head-hunters, and are so vague about the explanation, it seems probable that they have borrowed the head-hunting practice, as they have borrowed the flute, the metal knife, and the occasional practice of agriculture. We cannot draw any firm conclusion from them, but may take note of their particular attention to the moon.

Another remnant of this primitive negrito race, which has thus wandered from the cradle of humanity to the east of Asia, is found in the Malay Peninsula; but we have even clearer evidence here of adulteration. The Sakai, who are sometimes quoted in this connection, are now generally recognized to be a mixture of the primitive negrito and the Malay, and their culture will not interest us. But in the same region are the almost pure negrito Semangs, and in the learned work of W. W. Skeat and C. O. Blagden (*Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula*, 1906)

<sup>1</sup> *Die Philippinen*.

<sup>2</sup> *The National Geographical Magazine*, March, 1911, September, 1912, and November, 1913.

we have a valuable summary of all that is known concerning them and their religion.

I fear that it throws little light on the present phase of our subject, though it has much indirect interest. They have, it seems, a very pronounced belief in spirits, but "remarkably few traces of demon-worship, very little fear of ghosts of the deceased, and still less of any sort of animistic beliefs" (p. 174). They have "a kind of deities called Kari and Ple," though "there is practically no trace of an actual cult." Kari is a "thunder-god," a being of supernatural size and fiery breath. He created all things except the bodies of men, which his subordinate, Ple, made. Kari is angered by evil conduct and is the supreme judge of souls, but Ple intercedes for men. Human sacrifice is occasionally demanded by Kari, and on that occasion only prayer is offered to him. There is no cult of Ple. There are, besides, hosts of spirits in every element of nature. The human spirit is a small red substance which dwells, after death, in the water or the storm. Magic and legend are richly developed.

From this people, though it is in itself undoubtedly primitive, we can draw no conclusion whatever. The Semang have largely adopted the Malay language and Malay culture, and it would be idle to doubt that, as our authors say, they have also borrowed religious ideas. Vaughan-Stevens, one of the leading authorities, denies that they believe in spirits; but in this he is scarcely consistent. Their primitive culture is, however, so richly and obviously overgrown with Malay ideas that we must leave it out of account.

We pass to America, where fragments of the first human army which invaded the Western world (probably from Alaska) are still found in the Brazilian forests and in the island of Tierra del Fuego. Professor K. von den Steinen has made a careful inquiry among the primitive peoples of Brazil, and his work, *Unter den Naturvölkern Zentral Brasiliens* (1894), contains good material for our purpose. It is a valuable study, informed by an equally sympathetic and scientific interest.

These tribes—they have reached the level of tribal organization, and have chiefs, of little power—have villages, agriculture, pottery, flutes, combs, and a primitive art; but their language, which has no collective nouns, shows that much of this is a foreign intrusion on a very low level. They have an implicit belief in the duality of man and the continuance of his “shadow” after death. In their case this is clearly connected with their belief in the reality of dreams. The adventures of the dream are real adventures, and they even lie to each other to gain prestige by wonderful dreams. In the dream, or when they are stupefied by tobacco, the shadow or double leaves the body. Death merely means that it has not got back in time to the body. They wait until the sixth day before burying the corpse, and then they conclude that it will not return. They bury the woman’s household implements or the man’s weapons with the corpse, holding that they will be of the same use in the continued but invisible life. Here they show a tincture of Christian influence (the traveller tells us), for they say that

the dead henceforth live with their ancestors "in heaven."

In connection with these ancestors they seem to have borrowed from higher tribes ideas like those of the Bushmen and, as we shall see, the Australians. They have no worship or religious ceremonies, but certain ancestors, Keri and Kame, hold a very prominent place in their legends, and are credited with having created fire, and the rivers, and practically everything. Sometimes—a point to be carefully noted—they put Keri and Kame in the sun and moon, but their further speculations about the sun and moon warn us, as ever, not to expect clear and precise ideas. The sun is a great ball of feathers, they say, covered with a pot at night and taken round to the east again by a snake. It was an entirely new idea to them when the traveller asked how a fiery body could be a ball of feathers. "It might be magic," they suggested, plainly as an afterthought. The stars were feathers, holes in a flute, seeds, or heads of shining posts. They had a rich non-religious cosmogony of the crudest description.<sup>1</sup>

Magic was universal and unceasing. The medicine-men were beneficent or maleficent, and any man could qualify for the office by four months' fasting and rigorous discipline. Often a man showed his fitness or power by feats of drinking or smoking. The whole business had nothing to do with religion.

<sup>1</sup> P. Ehrenreich (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 1905, Supplement, p. 44) shows that these myths, including Keri and Kame, are universal in America, so they were probably borrowed.

The wicked medicine-man of one village was hired to bring disease (especially by the use of poisons, but sometimes by charms over his hair or blood) upon some man in another village. The good medicine-man was then hired to fight the disease. Similarly with a belief in which we may see a germ of totems. They drew no sharp distinction between men and animals. A medicine-man could change himself or others into animals, and some tribes were said to have descended from animals.

Another very primitive Brazilian people, the Bolo-cudos, is described by Dr. A. H. Keane.<sup>1</sup> They are naked nomads, without agriculture or metal, though they have tribal organization. Their language has no numeral beyond one. All beyond that is "many." Some travellers declare that they have no religion; others that they regard the sun as a good principle, but do not worship it, and the moon as an evil principle and an object of propitiatory worship. This seems to be an exaggeration of a sentiment akin to that of the races we have examined, but Dr. Keane says that it is at least certain that they attribute evil influence to the moon (the "night-fire"), which causes fires and, by occasionally falling upon the mountains, floods. They believe that there are spirits in the storm, and they shoot arrows against it. They place no weapons with the dead, but they light a fire, and are said—the evidence is not given—to do this in order to scare away evil spirits.

The Brazilian tribes are believed to be akin to the

<sup>1</sup> "On the Botocudos," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XIII, 1884.

Yahgans of the southern island, Tierra del Fuego, and these are not only more isolated, but are, fortunately, better known. Even here, however, the isolation is imperfect. Two higher peoples occupy the greater part of the island, and have driven the Yahgans into the bleak and inhospitable strip of the south-western coast. Here they slowly die out. The hard conditions seem to have reduced them from a somewhat higher level. They have a fair height (over five feet) and a good cranial capacity (1,450 cm.), but the comparative richness of their tongue is not in accord with their present culture. They seem to be a slightly degenerated relic of the first population of America, antecedent to the Amerinds.

Our chief authorities here are P. Hyades and J. Deniker, two very competent observers who conducted a scientific mission among them in 1882 and 1883.<sup>1</sup> They found the Yahgans as satisfactory in their social behaviour as we have found similar lowly peoples, though "they certainly have no abstract idea of right and wrong." As to religion, the authors emphatically say (p. 253):—

We have studied them very closely from this point of view during the year that we have spent with them, and we have never detected the least allusion to any kind of cult or religious idea.

In confirmation of this they quote the earlier words of a missionary, T. Bridges, who had spent twenty years in Tierra del Fuego:—

Their past is almost as unknown to them as their

<sup>1</sup> *Mission Scientifique du Cap Horn* (1891), vol. vii.

future; they have neither hope nor fear beyond the grave; for them there is neither God, nor good, nor evil, nor spirits to fear apart from the phantoms which may injure them in this world; death is the end of existence, and they have no idea of a spiritual life or of the composition of man from a body and a soul.<sup>1</sup>

Such testimonies have been strangely overlooked by writers who generalize on the religion of primitive peoples; nor can it be said in this case that the natives were reluctant to tell their ideas. If it be suggested, as perhaps Mr. Andrew Lang would have suggested, that their religion has decayed, we should have a remarkable instance to submit to those who preach the social inevitability of religion in hard conditions of life. But we need not speculate on these matters. The reference of Bridges to "phantoms" pricks our curiosity, and presently we find Hyades and Deniher saying that they have discovered "certain ideas that might be referred to superstition, though their origin was the fear of maleficent individuals" (p. 254). The women decline to sever the umbilical cord at birth, and they eventually burn the cord and the placenta. We should be hasty in attributing this to a semi-religious notion, but we seem to be nearer religiosity when we learn that they burn hairs that have fallen or been pulled out, that the young women of a house make dark lines under their eyes when the milk comes into the breast of a mother, and that very soon after confinement, even in the cold winter, a

<sup>1</sup> Page 253.



mother bathes ceremoniously in the sea. They can give no explanation of these things. It is the custom. They plainly do not attach any spirit-meaning to the ritual.

Nearer still are we to religion, if not quite within its outlying marshes, when we learn that illness and death are ascribed to certain fantastic beings who live in caves and in the depths of the forests. These "wild men of the woods" are not spirits. They are generally invisible, but the few Yahgans who shudderingly boast of having seen them describe them as one-eyed monsters, bald horrors, and so on. They are malignant, and sometimes steal children. In fact, they are more like the Celtic fairies than the spirits of the Andamanese.

The authors, unfortunately, leave us uncertain on the very interesting question of the origin of these "wild men" (as the natives call them). Since, however, this vagueness is probably a faithful reflection of the native mind, it is instructive. On the one hand, the Yahgans have not an explicit belief that they live on after death. They bury the dead decently and burn his hut. They even calcine his bones, so that no part may be irreverently used in making harpoons. But this is not necessarily a proof of more than sorrow and affection, and they profess no belief in a future life. They are lively dreamers, yet attach no significance to dreams. On the other hand, they regard the higher inhabitants of the island with dread and awe, and one suspects that these abler and more aggressive tribesmen are the real originals of their "wild men." Periodically

they are thrown into a violent commotion and panic at night, and they say that the wild men are coming from the west to kill them. Hyades and Deniker seem to regard these as "spirits of the dead," yet a little later (p. 255) they expressly say: "The Fuegians commonly believe that these wild men are the Alakolufs (the more dreaded of their neighbours)."

We appear to have here an exceptionally interesting phase of the making of religion. The living Alakolufs are already half supernatural in the hazy minds of the Yahgans. They are on the way to become what a missionary would call evil spirits. It is the same with their magic, if we can grant them such a thing at all. The older men are all medicine-men, and they draw disease out of a man by using set forms of words. It is not said that the wild men cause disease, though they may cause death; but it would take little further development to give the Yahgans a belief in malignant invisible beings who cause all their ills. It is one of the most interesting cases of embryonic religion and magic, still separated from each other.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEANING OF THE FACTS

THESE are the earliest traces of religious sentiment or practice which we find among living races of men. The peoples chosen for investigation are the lowest known to the anthropologist, and I have separated them sharply from even the Australians and Melanésians, with whom speculation on the origin of religion is too apt to begin. They are not all at the same level of culture. The Old Stone Age, which lives in them, was, it is often forgotten, a period of certainly more than, possibly two or three times as much as, a hundred thousand years. It had a dozen different stages of culture, and these lowly peoples left their fellows, and fell into an almost complete stagnation, at different stages. Many of them have since borrowed ideas or weapons; in others special circumstances may have stimulated a slight native development. But they do collectively represent the lowest stratum of religious life known to us, and they are the proper basis of speculation.

The reader must not, however, expect that they are going to suggest to us some entirely novel theory of the origin of religion. The subject has been too long and too keenly debated to leave much room for originality, and these facts are, after all, only more

rudimentary forms of the better known facts. But we are now in a position to choose more judiciously between the conflicting theories. For my part, I have declined to speculate until I had explored this lowest stratum quite apart from later developments. My bias was towards the view that the more striking movements of nature—the progress and fire of the sun, the rush of wind and river, and so on—had first evoked the superstitious in the imagination of early man. The facts at once corrected that bias, and I now endeavour patiently and impartially to interpret their message.

The old theory of Lucretius, that “fear made the gods,” was favoured in the days when men began to discard the old ideas of a divine or a demonic inspiration of religion. It is clear from the contents of the last chapter that there is much truth in that view, or guess. The mere rudiment of religion which we find among the Yahgans is predominantly, inspired by fear, and the sentiment of terror is strong and radical in other cases. But we saw that fear is not at all the single, or even the preponderating, ingredient of all early superstition. The very primitive Veddah has little of it; the Tasmanian or the Bushman is equally alive to good and bad in his rudimentary religion. Perhaps we shall find fear more influential in later stages of development. Primitive man is not savage; and man makes gods to his own image and likeness.

In the middle of the nineteenth century more scientific theories, or views based upon positive evidence, were put forward. Max Müller, starting

from the religion of the early Vedas, in which the sun and moon, fire and water, are the outstanding deities, suggested that religion began with the personification of these. He believed that the earlier Hindus had rightly conceived these natural objects, but that, through the vagueness of their language, a later generation took the traditional names to be personal. No one now admits this "disease of language"; but, since the elements *are* personified in many religions, the chief idea is obviously sound. However, it remains to see if this personification, or animation, as is now said, was an early or a late development.

Against this theory Herbert Spencer, whose view is elaborately expanded by Grant Allen in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, contended that religion began with a belief that man's shade survived death and the cult that was awarded to these surviving shades. Since the life after death of the savage is literally a continuance of this life, the chief remains a chief and is duly honoured; the great or famous chief retains his superior power, and, in the memory of the tribe or race, rises towards the position of a deity amid the crowd of the dead.

Sir E. B. Tylor, in his *Primitive Culture* (1877), brought attention back to the movements of nature and founded the theory which is known as Animism. From dreams and trances and speculation about death primitive man is supposed to have gathered the idea of an animating spirit, and to have applied this at once to nature. Behind the storm, the

torrent, the fire, or the earthquake, he saw "some prodigious but half-human creature," and he gradually filled the woods and the air, the waters and the skies, with invisible spirits, which worked the frame of nature as his own spirit worked the mechanism of the body.

A third typical theory was put forward by the author of *The Golden Bough*. Sir J. G. Frazer believes that magic preceded religion. Even primitive men, he thinks, were at last convinced of "the inherent falsehood and barrenness of magic," and the failure of their efforts set them thinking whether there might not be another order of agents, more powerful than themselves, behind the frame of nature. This begot religious belief. "To these mighty beings, whose handiwork he traced in all the gorgeous and varied pageantry of nature, man now addressed himself, humbly confessing his dependence on their invisible power and beseeching them of their mercy to furnish him with all good things."

On these fundamental hypotheses, or some modification of them, all later speculation has spent itself. The eminent French authority, S. Reinach, sought a stage before magic, and believes that he has found it in tabu.<sup>1</sup> Magic is, he says, "the mark of a bold offensive on the part of man against the perils which beset him and the miseries he endures." Such boldness does not seem congruous with the timidity and ignorance of early man, and

<sup>1</sup> *Orpheus* (1909) and *Cults, Myths, and Religions* (1912).

Reinach conceives it as preceded by the negative defence of the tabu. Alfred Loisy<sup>1</sup> retorts that animism must have preceded both tabu and magic, since they imply at least a belief in an impersonal force in nature. Alfred Réville, the distinguished French authority on comparative religion, thinks that it began in the animation or deification of the secondary forces of nature: the forces which make the rain fall and the trees grow. Dr. Allan Menzies<sup>2</sup> and other theologians ascribe the growth of religion to an inner pressure or impulse of the human mind which compels all peoples to recognize gods.

But the main concern of the ablest recent writers has been to detect a stage anterior to the Animism of Tylor, and opinion now generally favours "Pre-Animism." Sir E. B. Tylor imagined primitive man putting a myriad of definite personal spirits, like his own but more powerful, into the various parts of the machinery of nature. The new theorizers resolve these beings into one great pervading force which primitive man believed he shared, or with which he was in communication. Dr. D. G. Brinton<sup>3</sup> conceives this force as a "World-Soul, manifesting itself individually in every form of matter from the star to the clod." The savage, like the child, he thinks, regards conscious will as "the ultimate source of all force." This will-power in nature, and in the consciousness of the savage himself,

<sup>1</sup> *Apropos d'histoire des religions* (1911) and *La religion* (1917).

<sup>2</sup> *History of Religion* (1906).

<sup>3</sup> *Religions of Primitive Peoples* (1897).



is "at first vague, impersonal, undefined, but is gradually differentiated and personified."

Mr. R. R. Marett<sup>1</sup> has, perhaps, put the new theory in its most popular form. He also contends that the belief in an impersonal, all-pervading force or power preceded the belief in personal spirits or gods. Before man became Animistic he had "numerous dimly-lighted impressions of the awful." This vague awe of surrounding powers was the common plasm out of which religion and magic proceeded. Man experienced it, especially in dreams, trances, and disease, and in the presence of death. The power he dimly perceived was something like the *mana* of the Melanesians. Violent movements in nature, even curious stones or animals, suggested it. The idea of personal spirits was only gradually evolved out of it. Irving King<sup>2</sup> also argues for this primitive belief in an impersonal power, and points out that it is characteristic of the Amerinds, who have several names for it, as well as the Melanesians.

On the other hand, Dr. L. R. Farnell, in his valuable *Evolution of Religion* (1905), places the chief stress on primitive man's horror of blood. He collects much evidence which shows primitive man's concern about the shedding of blood and about death, and he thinks that these phenomena may have early inspired the idea of conflicting good and evil principles. Mr. E. Crawley suggests (*The Tree of Life*, 1905) that primitive religion was a general attitude towards, or consecration of, life, and

<sup>1</sup> *The Threshold of Religion* (1909).

<sup>2</sup> *The Development of Religion* (1910).

does not necessarily involve a belief in gods or spirits. A. Dieterich (*Mutter Erde*, 1905) starts from an analysis of early Greek religion, and concludes that "mother earth" was the first object of cult and inspirer of religious feeling. Professor Leuba (*The Psychological Study of Religion*, 1912) shows a more catholic attitude. He does not believe that religion was inspired by a particular set of phenomena. All man's unusual or more striking experiences—dreams, disease, death, hysteria, the facts of conscience, the movements of nature, the need to explain things—had a simultaneous share in it. Professor J. T. Shotwell, in fine, has some careful and sympathetic pages on the origin of religion in his work (*The Religious Revolution of To-day*, 1913), and offers us a fresh and finely-expressed version of the Pre-Animistic hypothesis.

There is, as I said, little room for originality, if one had the ambition to be original, which is one of the most disturbing elements in the science of our day. Every possible source of the inspiration of religious feeling is included among the preceding hypotheses, and it is the question of priority which chiefly distracts and divides our authorities to-day. Shall we grant this priority to totems, tabu, magic, *mana*, or personal spirits? Or shall we regard all, or most, of these outgrowths of the primitive imagination, not as successive species which evolve one from the other, but as separate and possibly simultaneous emergences from the dim under-world of primitive man's blurred mental mirror of his environment?

The reader will now see plainly why I attach so much importance to beginning with the really lowest peoples. It is mainly a question of priority, and to this more advanced peoples give us little or no clue. Now, whether their theories prove sound or no, none of the writers whom I have noticed follow this procedure. Max Müller's basis of fact was narrow and of comparatively late date. Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen—the former necessarily, since he wrote in an early stage of the science of anthropology—adduce as primitive facts of the religious life the practices and beliefs of savages who are not really primitive. In Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* there is scarcely even a faint allusion to the peoples I described in the last chapter, and the argument is mainly based upon the life of the relatively late Bantu tribes of Africa.<sup>1</sup> Tylor, a distinguished anthropologist, could not be accused of this narrowness; but we had not in his time clearly arranged peoples according to their grades of culture, or adequately explored the lowest depths of primitive humanity, and his appeals to savage peoples are not informed by precise indications of the relative priority of the culture of those peoples.

This defect survives even in the more recent of the literature I have surveyed. The prevailing theory of Pre-Animism has seized upon certain facts of the religious life of savages who are far from the primitive level. The great word of this literature is *mana*; the name which the Mela-

<sup>1</sup> For other criticisms see L. Marillier's *Origine des dieux* (1899).

nesians give to the impersonal force or influence which they regard as pervading nature, including themselves, almost in the shape of a subtle fluid or electricity of which one man may accumulate more than another. But the Melanesians are relatively an advanced group of peoples; the Polynesians, who are sometimes adduced, are a very advanced group. Mr. Marett is careful to warn his readers that he does not place so definite a conception as that of *mana* at the very root of religion. He pleads only that it is, among living religious ideas, the nearest to the vague archetype. But of other peoples he quotes only such equally or more advanced specimens as the Australians, the Eskimo, the Amerinds, and so on.

Brinton and other recent writers are even less attentive to this much-needed discrimination. Because the *mana* of the Melanesian is found to correspond closely to the *manitou*, the *wakonda*, and the *arenda* of the various Amerind tribes, there is a tendency to think that a formula has been found. The Amerinds are far less primitive even than the Melanesians. As to other writers, who begin with the apparently primitive elements of an historical religion and seek savage parallels to it, the procedure seems to be dangerous, and the parallels are chosen with the usual lack of attention to cultural levels. Let us see what our primitive peoples tell us.

The first lesson that they plainly yield is that the mind of primitive man, which they represent, did not pass through uniform or quite similar stages in

different regions. At the lowest level, that of the pure Veddahs, the Aetas, and the Yahgans, whose culture places them unequivocally below all other peoples, there is neither definite religion nor definite magic; and the feeble and vague tendencies in those directions are not uniform. Among the Veddahs we find merely that the dead have a name (*yaka*, which seems to mean to the purer Veddah no more than "dead"), that animals are scared away by yells, and that there is a tendency to take interest in the sun and the moon. The Aetas have a plainer interest in the moon, since they light fires and dance when it is full; but they do not seem to have the germ of a belief in continuance after death. The Yahgans are totally indifferent to movements in nature or to the mental part of themselves, but they have the germ of religion in their assignment of weird shapes and wonderful powers to certain "wild men" who seem to be a fanciful conception of their neighbours.

At the next level the Botocudos ascribe a large evil influence (of a purely material kind) to the moon, and see spirits in the storm; while the Tasmanians thickly people their world with the shadows of dead men, have an incipient awe of the sun and moon, and practise explicit magic. At the third and highest level of this lowly world the Brazilian tribes have especially developed the idea that the dream or trance-part of a man leaves the body at death, and have (probably under foreign influence) given a prominence to certain ancestors and credited them with marvellous powers; the

Bushmen have given a similar prominence and power to what seem to be certain ancestors, but are vague about the spirit of man; the Andamanese and the Semang have strongly developed a spirit-world out of the detachable double of man, and have also proceeded far in the personification of the sun and moon.

It appears, then, that any theory of the origin of religion which would assign to it a single root, or make primitive peoples pass through definite and uniform phases, is wrong. The truth, so far, is with Professor Leuba. Mother Earth is certainly not the first inspirer of religion. Blood has no better title to that position. The elements of nature, primary or secondary, take no general precedence of man's inner experience as inspirers of the awe or curiosity which begets religion. Magic does not exist at the lowest level and is not uniformly developed, or more developed than what may be called religion, at the other levels. Totemism does not exist at all at this level. Tabus are rare and rudimentary.

In particular it must be said that there is nothing like a general *mana* stage. To put it more precisely, the theory that man begins with a vague awe of nature, passes to a belief that there is a great impersonal power pervading it, and finally shapes this power into personal spirits, does not seem to correspond to the facts. At the lowest level—the Veddahs, Aetas, and Yahgans—the emotion which chiefly promises a beginning of religion is connected with definite persons: the dead man, living enemies,

or wild animals. At the next level—the Tasmanians—the conception of personal spirits is much more pronounced than the vague animistic feeling; and even the latter tends towards the personification of a few definite objects in nature rather than a belief in a general diffused force. At the highest level the belief in definite personal spirits is most developed; and there is a pronounced Animism, but no definite belief in anything like a universal *mana*. This Melanesian doctrine seems to be a late development.

Magic, similarly, cannot be claimed to have preceded religion. There is no magic at the lowest levels. The Sarasins insist that the supposed incantations of the pure Veddahs against wild animals are mere terrifying shrieks; and their arrow is not known to have a magical significance. The Yahgans say that they attach no magical meaning to their practices in connection with child-birth; the power they ascribe to the Alakolufs cannot be called magical; and they have no medicine-men. The Aetas are, as far as the evidence goes, in the same condition. In the other peoples magic, medicine-men, and belief in spirits are developed in equal strength; while nature-worship is clearly sprouting from an independent root.

That there is no “supreme being” or “god” at this level need not be emphasized. Not until we reach the ‘Kaang of the Bushmen, the Puluga of the Andamanese, and the Keri and Kame of the Brazilians do we find anything which even the most resolute theologian could call by that name. In



each of these cases, we must remember, there is reason to be on our guard against infiltrations from a higher level. The development would be quite natural, and may be in some cases native; but in point of fact these are tribes particularly exposed to adulteration, and actually showing clear traces of Christian or other modification of their traditions. In any case, one need not waste time quarrelling with any writer who cares to regard 'Kaang, or Keri, or Puluga as a "supreme being." The more primitive peoples have no such belief.

On the whole, it seems that the isolation and careful analysis of this evidence taken from the most primitive peoples favour, but do not literally endorse, the theory of Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen. Indeed, since Sir E. B. Tylor held that man got the idea of spirit from himself and *then* applied it to the elements of nature, his theory is confirmed. It is quite possible for primitive man to conceive the sun or moon as a person long before he has any idea that he himself has a shadow or spirit-part. But if the evidence is carefully surveyed it shows that in the soil of the primitive mind the root of religion which thrives best is the belief that men survive death and continue to be useful or malevolent to their fellows. Magic seems to grow quite independently as a secular "trial-and-error" method of combating disease or a childish appreciation of mere coincidences. It begins to mingle with religion when disease is attributed to malignant spirits. Generally speaking, it is a secular occupation, with which this work is not concerned. Totemism,

spirits, and temples, even rudimentary, have not begun at this level, and will be considered later.

But in all this we are using the language of the twentieth century. We are trying to fit the ideas of the man of a hundred thousand years ago into those mental boxes or categories which a wonderfully different experience has built in our minds. When we apply such words as "religion" and "spirit," or even "magic," to the hazy images or feelings of one of these primitive creatures we are apt to delude ourselves. The supreme lesson of the inquiries into the mind of the savage that I quoted in the last chapter is that it is almost impossible for us to think as he does. What are to us the most obvious distinctions do not occur to him, though he has lived a hundred thousand years. Because we should at once decide between certain alternatives, superficial travellers think that *he* must have done the same, and they strain his answers in one direction or the other. Let us see if we can get a little nearer to his mind, to the facts of primitive religious life.

We may take first the five peoples whom I have, in virtue of their general culture (*not* their religious beliefs), assigned to the lowest and next layer of primitive life. How does nature impress them? They are almost as insensible to its moving panorama as are the beasts which live beside them. The Yahgan shudders in the fierce southern gales, and repeatedly beholds the great sea, from which he takes his food, pass from calm to such rage as our shallow coasts never witness. The

Veddah yearly sees the sun grow to a tropical fierceness and sink again; he constantly observes a fringe of dark clouds drawn over the brilliant sky, and luminous darts shoot from them, and hears portentous bursts of thunder roll through his forests. Night by night, for a hundred thousand years, these men have witnessed the drama of the setting of the sun and the revelation of a star-strewn canopy overhead. And they have never wondered; for wonder would beget at least some such childish guesses as the tribes of the Amazon or the Bushmen have made.

In regard to this aspect of the origin of religion, there is no need whatever to go down to the animal world. If these men of the Old Stone Age, between whom and the apes is a vast world of development, have no curiosity, we need go no farther backward. I have seen a young dog shiver in its first heavy hailstorm, or stare when it heard the thunder of a dozen guns. There was a faint semblance of wonder and awe. But even these primitive men have not got specifically beyond that stage, or advanced to either interrogation or propitiation, so that we have no need to explore the gloomy region of animal psychology. A rudimentary awe is all that we find.

The next stage differs in different branches of the race. The sun, which one would expect especially to arrest the mind when it at last rises to rude speculation, does not really receive much attention. The Brazilian naively takes it to be a ball of parrot's feathers—it is so light and bright—and explains its nightly extinction and return to the east. He has no idea of personifying or venerating it. The

Bushman is little different. The Tasmanian seems merely to lift a dully wondering face towards it at times. The Andamanese personifies and respects it; but here we cannot be quite sure of having a genuine primitive development. The moon, possibly because its paler light seems, even to us, uncanny after the blaze of day, attracts attention a little earlier. Dances by moonlight are, at least, common; though this is said to be in most cases a matter of convenience. The Botocudo is clear that the moon does harm, but not in a personal way, apparently. It is a heavy body that tumbles down. The stars and the brilliant blue sky, the mother-earth and the annual outpour of foliage and flowers, evoke no response in these primitive minds. Only the higher among them begin to fancy spirits in the thunder's roar or the shriek of the wind.

It is plain, too, that at this point begins the transfer to nature of the primitive interpretation of man. That the speculation—if we may use the term—about man begins earlier and develops more rapidly than the speculation about nature I take to be a general truth established by the evidence I have given. Here we must especially be on our guard against the anachronism of making primitive man look out upon nature with our outfit of ideas. We make a clear and fundamental distinction, however difficult it may be to define it, between the living and non-living. He does not. Some things move, and some things never or rarely move; but *our* distinction between movement from within (life) and movement from without is leagues removed

from him. Indeed, he has no abstract ideas; and without abstract ideas there is no classification, and there is only a rudimentary judgment. He therefore does not say to himself that a man who had life has lost it, and the question whether any part of him survives does not, at the lowest stage, present itself. Like the animal, he notices only what he sees, and does not speculate on what he does not see.

Instead, therefore, of saying that he finds it more natural to believe in a continuance of life than in a cessation of it, I should say that the distinction is entirely beyond him. The question whether the man lives on in some shape does not occur to him. This stage is preserved in the lowest peoples we examined. A new stage begins in the Veddah, who calls the dead man a *yaka*. It is probable that what first makes him put the dead man in a different category from the living is the decay of the corpse. The fact that the body remains inert longer than during sleep would not of itself excite so much attention. But the body soon *puts itself* into so strikingly different a category that he forms a new idea and borrows a new word. It would be interesting to know whether such words meant originally something like "stiff" or "stink." At the Veddah stage he leaves it there. The Sarasins are emphatic that the untainted Veddahs are completely insensible to the question whether the man is still alive or no.

In other cases a different experience has set him thinking. In one case we saw it was the dream; in another the shadow; in a third the reflection of

himself in water. These are not successive phases, but experiences that severally appeal to the mind when it rises above the Veddah level. From the shadow or the mirrored image he dimly philosophizes that he is double. Why should these beings—they are beings to him—always be attached to him at the feet, sink back into him when he moves, and be such plain duplicates of himself? Even the mind of a Tasmanian draws the simple conclusion; he is double. Where dreams are vivid, the double comes conveniently as an explanation of them. It was his shadow-part—he knows nothing about mind and body—that was away hunting during the night. It is very possible that the dream leads him to the next step. Dead friends appear to him in dreams, and talk to him. So they are alive. Their doubles are about somewhere. Nothing surprises him. It is just as natural, perhaps more natural, for them to be still in existence than otherwise. Nightmares or bad dreams would particularly influence the belief. The man he has killed, perhaps eaten, torments him; or some hated, aggressive dead member of his community is suffocating him after too heavy a meal at night.

From this to the belief that all live on is an easy development. The night, especially, fosters the belief. It is in the night that the dead appear to him, admonish him, or try to choke him. During the night he easily fancies he sees faint shapes in the moon-lit woods, and he does hear weird and terrifying sounds. The bad dead men are still bad. In the daytime he sees nothing, but they must be

somewhere about, probably hiding in the woods. Not until a much later stage does he banish them to a distant land. They are in the great waves that dash his canoes against the rocks, the storms that tear up his hut, the invisible darts of pain and disease, and, in fine, the mysterious blow which makes a man a *yaka* although no one has injured him. Thus he begins to animate nature, to cherish good ancestors, to create devils.

Whether or no we call this religion is really of little interest. It is difficult to define anything that takes shape very gradually, as religion did. At all events, the question does not in the least interest me. But a protest ought to be raised about the constant use of the word "spirit" in these cases. Very few of the moderns who talk about spirit know precisely what they mean, but they do at least mean the mental part of a man. Now the savage does not sever mind and body. A man has two bodies. The other body wants food and weapons as well as the body that decays. There is nothing "supernatural" about it. Life goes on. The powerful or wise man remains powerful or wise, and can help. The bad man remains bad.

Here, too, this which some prefer to call religion mingles with magic and cosmogony. When disease is due to the dead, the medicine-man has to deal with shades. One of the essential distinctions between magic and religion is well defined by Leuba. Magic is "coercitive"; the medicine-man compels things to do so and so. Religion appeals; the medicine-man begins to flatter or propitiate the



dead, and he thus becomes a priest. That phase is not found in the peoples we have studied. Simultaneously, in some tribes, the brighter minds begin to ask where things came from. A hut or spear or canoe does not grow like a tree. You have to make it. Man begins to have abstract ideas, categories, distinctions. There are, perhaps, fine huts or bows in his district that were made by clever or strong men who are dead. Their deeds loom larger and larger, as time goes on. They become Samsons, ultimately Jahvehs. Perhaps they made the sun and moon. At our present level this is only beginning, and is not certainly native. We shall see it plainly in the next chapter.

These are the main roots of religion. Special sources of inspiration must not, however, be neglected. Among the Yahgans, we saw, the near presence of a superior and aggressive people gives birth to a notion of "wild men" who are already half legendary. In time such a process would yield demons or gods. Probably contact with the more powerful tribes, which have driven them onward, has a good deal to do with the evolution of a belief in supernatural powers. Among the Bushmen certain uncanny little animals, which pass suddenly from invisibility to visibility, are a source of inspiration. In some places, which have tropical storms, the lightning and thunder are quick to attract attention. Strange rocks and plants and animals will inspire speculation on all sides as man develops.

This is, it seems to me, the chief lesson of really

primitive peoples. The "supernatural"—the projection into nature of beings and forces which are not there—begins in patches, not in a diffused mist which in time concentrates into drops of dew. It seems to be, generally, the other way about. Man, it is true, begins with a vague general feeling akin to awe. As such it goes little beyond the animal stage. He has no idea of "power," and does not first imagine a mighty impersonal power in or behind nature. Things which he does not like happen. So the dog or the ape feels. Then he develops a belief in living invisible men, and at the same time pays particular, but vague, attention to parts of nature—the sun and moon and the storm. If he has magic, which he has not always at this stage, it is more a matter of skill than of the control of a detached, impersonal power. Only in the higher stages does he think the medicine-man can do things at a distance, and even then there is no rudimentary philosophy of *mana*. His "supernatural" creeps gradually over nature. The drops of dew dissolve into mist, as we shall see. He seems to fill nature with personal spirits before he makes the subtler generalization of an impersonal spiritual influence. It is, surely, the easier way for a primitive mind.

It follows, too, that we must not unduly stress the emotion of fear. Where nature is most terrible, in Tierra del Fuego, there is no religion. Where it is comparatively genial, in Tasmania, the element of fear is strongest. The gods grow rather out of the fact that men are unequal here and will remain unequal in the invisible; though fear and anxiety

quicken the mood of appeal to them. The idea of survival, which gives the soil in which gods arise, is due in great measure to the harmless shadow or reflection in water or adventure in dream.

Several recent writers, such as Durkheim, have given a large part to social life in the inspiration of religion, and we may ask how far this examination of primitive peoples supports them. It gives them very little support. The distinction has been drawn that magic is individual and religion social. Whatever we may find at later and higher levels, it is not true of this level. The roots of religion are in the individual mind, not in any social life or need. It is not primarily—it is, in fact, rarely—concerned with birth.

In order to understand this we would do well to attempt to place these primitive peoples back in their proper stages in the development of the race. The culture of the ruder of them is earlier than the culture of Magdalenian (or Cave) Man. But social life did not properly begin until the Cave Period, during the Glacial Epoch. We have reason to think that early prehistoric man lived merely in family groups, as the anthropoid apes do. Rarely, before the Ice Age drove families to dwell together in caves, do we find traces of camps. Yet religion seems to have been largely developed before the Cave Period. Even if we allow some development of these peoples since they began their wandering, we find their social life extremely imperfect. Most of them have not formed tribes; few of them form villages. They live, for the most part, in small

communities, without heads, and have few common concerns. There is not a trace of anything like cult on behalf of the community. Dance is the only common function in which some see a semi-religious significance, but even this is disputed and obscure.

Morality, in fine, has no connection with their rudimentary religion. Most of them observe the Decalogue quite as well, at least, as the population of London or New York. Some of them have naive ideas of personal property, but in general they are honest, truthful, just, very monogamous, hospitable, not much addicted to quarrelling, and rarely guilty of murder. They are not savages. Savagery begins with higher intelligence and tribal organization. But at the lower level they have no idea corresponding to "moral law," and even at the higher level they cannot be said to have a sense of law. They go by tradition; as the Yahgan woman does who bathes in the sea after childbirth and does not know why. In my opinion, their good habits—so obviously useful in community life—are due to natural selection. They must grow more intelligent before they *perceive* the use of them and formulate laws. Then, we shall see, these laws will be ascribed to the gods. But at this level, and even at the higher level we are now to explore, the unconscious morality has no connection with the rudimentary religion.

I trust it will not be said that this is too intellectual a scheme of origins. I do not at all seek to put intelligence first and emotion second.

In all that I have written they work together. Indeed, the emotion of vague awe, wonder, and terror necessarily precedes speculation on nature, and some emotion precedes all speculation. I agree with my friend Professor Shotwell that religion is—in its simplest form at least—"the reaction of mankind to something apprehended but not comprehended," and that the first "apprehension" is (if one dare say so) emotional; though I cannot agree with Mr. Shotwell that man begins with a sense of pervading, mysterious force. In a sense, as Professor Leuba says, emotion and intelligence act together from the start. There is no such thing as one without the other. But the partnership in primitive man is unequal. Emotion is an old and vigorous growth in the biological world compared with this new and feeble aptitude which distinguishes man.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE THICKETS OF SUPERSTITION GROW

WE have seen the nature of the first pale shoots of superstition. As the brain of primitive man improves he forms a dim antecedent to our abstract or general ideas; he rises to the lowly height of wondering what it is in nature that has for ages made his fathers look with dull awe upon the moon or shudder before the storm; he begins to interpret the creatures of his dreams and the shape of himself which he sees in the stream. Within that primitive age which survives in the rude peoples we have examined, he attains a quite definite idea of the duality of man, the survival of the shadow part of himself, the continued wickedness of the wicked and the goodness of the good, and the retention after death of their superior power by the stronger or more intelligent members of his clan or tribe. Since those who were helpful in life still live, he naturally asks their help; and since the deeds of heroes ever grow greater with time, among lower peoples, certain shades of his invisible world are gradually endowed with what we call supernatural qualities. Indeed, generally a man is conceived to be more powerful after than before death. Thus, even at this level, we get the ancient "makers" of things, the choice spirits whose names are remembered.

The other sprouts of superstition seem to be simultaneous and separate, but feebler. Magic is at this level either a borrowed practice or a blind traditional belief, scarce worth the name of magic, that certain practices have good results. There is, at the lowest level, no consciousness of a power to compel results, or any idea of a subtle force which may be used in coercing man or nature. Tabus are just as primitive, and are non-magical. The Yahgan woman will not suffer the umbilical cord to be cut at birth, but the most plausible explanation is that she would simply regard it as a wound inflicted on her. The Veddah will not approach the cave where he has laid a dead man; but, for an obvious reason, neither would a European. These and similar things may become tabus, or merely superstitious prohibitions. Of totems, in all this world, there is no trace—a fact which gravely enfeebles the theories of such writers as Durkheim. Even the mantis and caddis-worm are not yet totems to the Bushman. Medicine men soon appear, and the skill tends to be concentrated in the hands of chiefs; possibly because such important persons as medicine men easily become chiefs. Of priesthood we can recognize but a germ among the somewhat adulterated higher peoples of this group. There are no rudiments of temples, and only the bare rudiments of cults.

We have next to see how these ideas and practices grow and blend with each other, to form the rank thickets of savage superstition. The proper procedure would be to place our lower peoples in groups according to their cultural levels, and ascend



strictly from one level to another. The familiar procedure of writers on the subject is tantalizing. They cite in rapid succession the beliefs and practices of tribes at a dozen different cultural levels. Eskimo and Polynesians, Australians and Bantu, Melanesians and Amerinds, are thrown together in a bewildering confusion. It would surely be more profitable to arrange these peoples in groups which roughly correspond to stages of human development, and to see how religion evolves from one level to the other. One may be confident that the element of uncertainty and controversy would thus be materially reduced; although, of course, nothing like a steady and uniform progression ought to be expected, for differences of environment are naturally reflected in the cultures of tribes at the same mental level.

That task cannot be attempted here, but I adhere to the anthropological ideal as carefully as the limitations of my work permit. In other words, peoples will be examined in the order of their evolutionary development, but only a certain proportion of our living peoples can be examined here at any length. The next step is, however, important, and I devote a chapter to it. I propose to illustrate the growth by three groups of peoples who indisputably represent three further stages of development. A few others at the same levels might be found here and there on the earth, and a comparison of their religious culture would be useful. Most of these will be noticed, as steps in evolution, in later chapters. For the modest purpose of this sketch it will suffice to pass from the Bushmen to the Australians, from the Australians

to the Melanesians, and from these to the Polynesians.

The result will bring vividly before the mind of any student of science an early phase of the story of the earth, and will justify the title of this chapter. In the Silurian Period, we have reason to believe, our plant-life invaded the land. A thin population of primitive mosses and ferns gradually arose in the slime of that torpid and torrid age. It corresponds to our first level of religion. But the rich air and perpetual summer fostered them, and during the Devonian Period we find thickets or groves of the fantastic and luxuriant successors of the Silurian ferns and mosses. The Australian life may represent the earlier, the Melanesian life the later, part of this Devonian Period. And just as the groves of the Devonian pass into the great dense forests of the Carboniferous Period, so the superstitions of the Melanesians are dwarfed by the myths and practices of their Polynesian neighbours.

The blacks of Australia are so frequently described, even by recent writers, as among the most primitive peoples known to us that one would imagine that there is some uncertainty on this point in anthropology. There is not. Whatever their origin and affinities (and all that I need state here is that they entered Australia from the north long after the ruder Tasmanians, and swept these into their south-eastern corner), they stand much higher in culture than most of the peoples we have examined in the last chapter, and distinctly higher than the Bushmen—the highest of that group. Yet they come so

near in many respects to the higher of our primitive peoples that they form an admirable stage in the evolution of religion. Spencer and Gillen, two of the leading authorities, give of them this summary description :—

Savages who have no idea of permanent abodes, no clothing, no knowledge of any implements save those fashioned out of wood, bone, and stone, or of the laying in of a supply of food to tide over hard times, no word for any number beyond three, and no belief in anything like a supreme being.<sup>1</sup>

Clearly we are still in the Old Stone Age, or at the very beginning of the Neolithic ; and there has been much disposition to regard the Australian as equivalent to Neanderthal man.

But in many respects the Australians show a higher development. They add the spear, spear-thrower, shield, boomerang, and a skilfully made flint-knife to the weapons of our earlier folk. Their marriage-relations are so complicated that they puzzled the authorities for decades. Their mythology is much more advanced than that of the Bushmen. Their ceremonies, especially in connection with the initiation of youths to manhood, are extremely elaborate ; and certain practices of theirs for the restriction of the population, which were described to me in Australia, are far beyond the primitive level in ingenuity. In particular, totemism, which we failed to find at the lower level, is among them so richly developed that in a sense their whole life is

<sup>1</sup> *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904), p. xiv.

based upon it. In every respect they are farther from the beginning of our race than any of the preceding peoples, and their sentiments and practices ought not to be quoted as "primitive religion."

We now find magic and religion thriving luxuriously. Sir J. G. Frazer writes that "among the aborigines of Australia, the rudest savages as to whom we possess accurate information, magic is universally practised, whereas religion in the sense of a propitiation or conciliation of the higher powers seems to be nearly unknown."<sup>1</sup> The restriction of the meaning of the word "religion" in this passage may save it from inaccuracy, though the distinguished writer's thesis—that magic preceded religion—is not confirmed by the results of our inquiry in the last chapter. But unless one pays close attention to this restriction it is very misleading. The belief that man survives the grave is among all the Australian aboriginals as fundamental and definite a conviction as is totemism or magic itself. If one half the superstitious practices of the Australians are based upon magic, the other half are based upon the intense belief in spirits; and certain of these spirits indeed stand out so prominently that other writers confidently class the Australians as believers in a supreme being. Indeed, the magic itself is so constantly associated with the belief in spirits that Frazer interprets circumcision as a way of providing a man with some "stock of energy" when his spirit is reincarnated, and he regards the totem as "the

<sup>1</sup> *The Magic Art*, I, 234. For the elaborate magic of the Australians see pp. 85-103.

animal, plant, or other natural object in which his spirit last resided." Those are religious ideas at least as elaborate as the magical practices.

The question of the origin of totems need not be discussed here. Various groups within a tribe are sharply severed from each other by reverence for a particular plant or animal—generally one that can be eaten—and this is their "totem." They themselves hold that they are descended from ancestors who were half human and half animal, and modern authorities are not agreed how this strange and rigid separation into these totemic groups came about. It is one of the growths of our primitive thicket that may be disregarded in this inquiry, at least until we reach the stage of animal-gods.

We may also, without vital injury to the inquiry, omit magic. To me the fundamental elements of religion are the belief in a survival of the grave and a belief in gods, with the practices which these beliefs inspire. The belief in a power resembling the Melanesian *mana* might be regarded as half-religious and half-magical, but we shall not find this very clearly among the Australians. It is not primitive. We have two definite beliefs, with corresponding practices—the belief that man has a spirit-part which lives (practically) for ever, and the belief that certain weird practices will influence disease, the weather, or the food supply. I prefer to regard the latter as a secular growth, independent of religion in origin, occasionally blending with it, and becoming ultimately, once more, a "popular superstition" not necessarily connected with religion. It is the belief

in spirits, personal or impersonal, which I seek to trace to its origins and pursue through its weird developments.

We have already seen that the belief in the duality of man and the survival of the shadowy part of him is the primitive religious belief, or at least the most vigorous of the shoots which thrive in the soil of the primitive mind. Among the Australians, we find, the last trace of uncertainty or obscurity about this has disappeared. It is a fixed and universal conviction of all the tribes that man does not wholly die, and with this belief we find associated a not less definite belief in a primitive age when a more powerful race of ancestors lived on the earth. This age, to which their thoughts ever tend, is known in the chief tribes as the Alcheringa. The beings who lived in it were endowed with powers far beyond those of modern men. They could fly, for instance, and they could add to the landscape a river or a range of mountains with the same ease with which a member of the Bushman's earlier race could make the stars or the sun. Nearly all the ceremonies of the tribes, which are very frequent and (for such a people) elaborate, are connected with these Alcheringa ancestors. At death a man's shadowy part returns to them, and he remains in that vague world—in the sky, they generally say—until he chooses to return to his country and be re-incarnated.

Re-incarnation is, in fact, the third universal element of the beliefs of the Australian tribes. The spirit may wander for a time in a free state, and it is then apt to be malignant and cause diseases.

Some tribes bind the corpse and put heavy stones over the grave, as if they would keep the spirit confined and prevent it from doing evil. Some put food with the dead, or light a fire by which the spirit may warm itself.<sup>1</sup> Sooner or later it enters a forming embryo in the mother's womb, and becomes again a living member of the tribe. There is thus no heaven or hell. Life simply goes on. The natives, indeed, have no idea of natural death, and they ascribe a man's temporary separation from the body to magic or to the action of malignant spirits. In some tribes the corpse is asked to name the culprit; and the older men, who preside at all ceremonies and keep the sacred objects and traditions of the tribe, pretend to gather the name. The dead are never named, as the spirit might hear and resent the freedom. Even the name of a living man ought not to be pronounced, as this would expose him to the magical influence of a malevolent neighbour.

So far we have a generally intelligible advance upon the Bushman level. The Australians attach a literal meaning to the adventures of the dream, and think that the double is temporarily absent. Death means that it has not returned in time to the body. Where the undying doubles came from originally is a point on which tribal traditions differ.

<sup>1</sup> I am putting together the general features of Australian religious life as described in Spencer and Gillen's *Northern Tribes of Central Australia* (1904) and *Native Tribes of Central Australia* (1899), Dr. A. W. Howitt's *Native Tribes of South Eastern Australia* (1904), and C. Strecklow's *Die Aranda und Loritja Stämme* (1907 and 1908).



Some say that the great Alcheringa ancestors found a strange half-formed race—half animal and half human—and converted them into the blacks. Some believe that they are themselves the re-incarnation of the Alcheringa ancestors. There is far more primitive speculation on such matters than in the lower peoples which we considered in the last chapter. The half-human ancestors are clearly connected with the general and highly developed totemism, and the earlier phases of that development are lost; but we are not here concerned with totemism. The belief that there was an earlier race of more powerful beings is, as we saw, not entirely new. We found a similar belief in South Africa. It is the outcome of a tendency which we have still in modern civilizations. We constantly have people asserting, in spite of a certain amount of exact evidence, that our fathers were taller or stronger or more moral than we. In lowly tribes this tendency is not checked by any written records, and an earlier generation, or group, which lives in the tribal memory, is easily raised to the rank of supermen.

More interesting is the question whether the Australians have "a supreme being." As we saw, Spencer and Gillen deny this, and they warn us not to take the black literally when he talks about his ancestors "making" rivers, hills, etc. Howitt says that they believe, at most, in a sort of "chief" of the other world rather than a creator; and he protests that, if religion be defined as the worship of a deity, the Australians have "no religion."

Religion is, of course, only so defined by writers (like Jevons) who contend that all peoples believe in a supreme being, and these writers confidently impute such a belief to the Australians. Streklow (a missionary) supports this, and tells us that the famous Arunta tribe, of Central Australia, have "a highest (or supreme) good being," named Altjira. Spencer and Gillen had called this into question, but Mr. Gillen afterwards found traces of the belief. The Euahlayi have an analogous "great being," whom they call Baiame; and a similar being stands out in other native traditions.

In other words, the lengthy controversy about the "god" of the Australians may be said to close with a general recognition that some sort of distinguished being does stand out in the mythology of most of the tribes. In the course of the nineteenth century this tribal myth has borrowed some of the features of deity gathered from the Christian invaders, and we have to be on our guard. The original "god" is a sorry representative of that species. Mr. Streklow describes the "supreme being" of the Arunta as a huge red-haired man with enormous feet. The voice of Baiame is said by other tribes to be heard in the thunder; though others again regard thunder as the noise of a corroboree of their mythical early race in the sky, when they are making rain. Mr. Marrett thinks that these "great spirits" are a pure figment of the natives. They have a wooden instrument called "the bull-roarer" (or *churinga*), by means of which they produce a feeble imitation of the roar of the thunder, and the

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noise it makes is by many of them vaguely conceived as, like thunder, the voice of the great being. Mr. Marrett thinks that the being has been invented to explain the voice. It is, however, the general belief that these powerful beings are magnified—we can hardly say deified—ancestors. Spencer and Gillen remark:—

Among the Central Australian natives there is never any idea of appealing for assistance to any one of these Alcheringa ancestors in any way..... They have not the vaguest idea of a personal individual other than an actual living member of the tribe who approves or disapproves of their conduct, so far as anything like we call morality is concerned.<sup>1</sup>

They have, it seems, a strict code of conduct, and the boy is told to expect severe punishment if he neglects it. But this punishment will come from themselves, and we learn the very interesting fact that, when the youth is put through the arduous ceremony of initiation to manhood, the "great being" is frankly described to him as a mere bogie for the purpose of intimidating women and children:—

He then learns that the spirit-creature whom, up to that time, as a boy, he has regarded as all-powerful is merely a myth, and that such a being does not really exist, and is only an invention of the men to frighten the women and children.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Northern Tribes of Central Australia*, p. 491.

<sup>2</sup> Same work, p. 492. Sir J. G. Frazer (I, 166) shows that the same trick is used by the Onas of Tierra del Fuego. The Onas even disguise themselves in appropriate costumes and play the part of the terrible "deity."

Mr. E. S. Hartland (*Man*, 1913, No. 83) has questioned part of the statement of Spencer and Gillen, and pointed out that there is at least a rudimentary propitiation of or appeal to the Alcheringa ancestors among the Australians. This is not unnatural. Mr. Howitt describes the "great spirit" (Bungil) of some of the south-eastern tribes as "a very kindly headman of a tribe, full of knowledge and tribal wisdom, and all-powerful in magic, of which he is the source, with virtues, failings, and passions such as the aborigines regard them" (p. 501). He tells us that there are other tribes who have no such belief in a superior being. We seem, therefore, to have the second phase of religion emerging among the Australians. Some restrict their belief to the continuity of a superior race of ancestors and of the shadowy part of themselves. Some give especial prominence to one among these traditional ancestors—unless we prefer to believe that they arbitrarily gave the "sky-land" a chief as a matter of fitness—regard the striking phenomenon of the thunder as his voice, and even think that, just as they make hillocks of earth, he once made the hills and mountains. Some, in fine, seem, in a rudimentary way, to have reached the practical conclusion that such a being ought to be able to help them. This last stage, however, we must remember, is rare and very vague. Generally speaking, there is no prayer, no cult, no priest, and no temple. It is only in the hiding-places where they keep their sacred objects (bull-roarers, etc.) that we may see a germ of temples.

On the practical side it is to magic that the blacks

turn, and the weird performances of their wizards and elders need not be considered here. They make rain, they cause or cure disease, and in some cases they profess to hold communication with the spirits. It is interesting to note that they have to some extent generalized the magical influence and given it a special name. It inheres in certain objects, and it is especially at the command of gifted sorcerers. They seem to regard it, not as skill, but as a vague influence; and it may therefore be regarded as a phase in the development of *mana* out of magical practices, as we shall see presently.

On the other hand, they have no nature-worship, though their imagination has invented a fairly elaborate cosmology. Some (the Arunta) regard the sun as the spirit of a former ancestor which came out of the earth and ascended to the sky. Some think that the moon and the stars also represent the spirits of ancestors. Others believe that they were made by ancestors, while one tribe regards them as camp-fires of the beings in sky-land. Spencer and Gillen describe a ceremony, performed among the Arunta at the birth of a child, which seems to contain the germ of sun-worship. The sun is the spirit of a female; the moon of a male. We have, in short, among the Australian tribes a phase of religion which evolves naturally from the simpler forms we studied in the last chapter, and leads on sensibly to the next phase which we will consider among the Melanesians.

The evolutionary position of the Melanesians—

the black inhabitants of the islands from New Guinea to the New Hebrides—is still a matter of controversy. Some relate them to either the Australians or the Negritos, as a later and more advanced offshoot from the same stock, while others regard them as the outcome of a blend of Asiatic invaders with the aboriginal blacks. Whatever be the sources of their blood, they are at a higher stage of culture than the Australians; and in the discussion of the origin of religion we must pay strict attention to this. The tribes which are so frequently lumped together as representing “primitive man” really represent vastly different stages in the evolution of man. We saw that the Australian—with his totems, marriages, legends, ceremonies, etc.—belongs to a later phase than our primitive peoples. On the same cultural tests the Melanesian exhibits a later phase than the Australian. He keeps pigs and cultivates fruit-trees. He owns and tills land, and lives in a settled village under a chief. He has very powerful secret societies. His religion is correspondingly advanced.

It is from these relatively advanced Melanesians that our writers on religion have borrowed the word *mana*, which has already occurred many times in these pages. *Mana* is, as I said, a general term for the invisible, intangible influence which an effective sorcerer or a powerful man uses. Such a man has “much *mana*.” I have likened it to the “animal magnetism” which was current in England a century ago, but it is broader than this. If the Melanesian find a curious or remarkable stone on

the beach, he concludes that it is likely to contain plenty of *mana*, and he takes it home and probably puts it at the root of his fruit-tree, to fertilize the tree. He calls a magical formula or charm "a *mana*." It is a subtle power that pervades his world, as we conceive ether to pervade the universe, and it may be gathered in concentrated form by sorcerers, chiefs, ghosts, or spirits. The ghost of the dead man is, as in Australia and elsewhere, believed to have more *mana* than the man had in life; and the Melanesian pushed his theory to the extreme practical conclusion of eating part of the body of some bold warrior in order to get his *mana*. It thus became the root of cannibalism and communion. To get more *mana*—which meant better crops, more pigs, more wealth and power and immunity from disease—is the ambition of every Melanesian, and it is thus in a sense the central fact of his life.

An increasing number of our authorities have, as I said, taken this *mana* to be a general early phase in the development of religion. It is quite understood that less definite conceptions must have preceded *mana*, and vague emotions must have preceded even these conceptions; but there is an increasing belief that in *mana* we have the nearest *living* approach to primitive religion. From this, on the ground of our inquiry in the previous chapter, I entirely dissent. Indeed, *mana* seems to me a development apart from the normal evolution of religion. Many writers are misled by the fact that *mana* is fully developed among the Mela-



nesians, while Animism is imperfectly developed, and they are therefore apt to speak of it as a Pre-Animistic phase. We shall see, however, that Animism does not grow out of the doctrine of *mana*, but directly from the belief in personal spirits; and we have already seen that this belief in personal spirits is fully developed long before the idea of *mana* is reached. It is clearly an error to imagine that, in point of evolution, the vague, impersonal influence known as *mana* was in the course of time shaped into personal spirits. All early religion concerns itself with definite personal spirits (or the shadow parts of human beings and the "great spirits" which a few of these become). The impersonal comes later. Primitive man is entirely concrete in his ideas. The kind of thing he can understand is the definite shadow or reflection of a man in water. He must grow out of infancy before he can generalize and grasp the impersonal.

*Mana* is thus a generalization of the relatively advanced mind, and it seems to me to belong much more to the world of magic than to the world of religion. The stage before *mana* is seen in the Australian. It is not a vague general awe of nature, which may pass into a conception of diffused spiritual power in nature. It is a belief that a certain very large class of actions and forms of words have the power to bring about certain results (rain, the death of a man, or the cure of disease), and that the surrounding world is full of definite personal spirits of great power. But the Australian does not easily generalize. He has not a definite

idea of power. He knows only that if a certain medicine man points a bone at him and utters certain words, he will die. The elder brother of the Australian, the Melanesian, makes this inevitable generalization. He forms the comprehensive idea of power or vital force, *mana*; and, although this *mana* is usually gathered and controlled by men or spirits, it is essentially a generalization of magical influence. It mingles with religion, but it neither sprang from the earlier phase of religion, the belief in spirits, nor leads to the later phase, the animation of nature.

The religion of the Melanesians is very fully and conscientiously described by two missionaries—Dr. R. H. Codrington (*The Melanesians*, 1891) and Dr. G. Brown (*Melanesians and Polynesians*, 1910), who worked for many years among them. I will first summarize the information they give us, and then notice a few independent accounts of special tribes.

There is, of course, throughout the islands a definite conviction of the duality of man. The name of the surviving part is said to be akin to the word for "shadow" (which generally means reflection in water as well as the dark outline on the ground), and it is thought that this shadowy part leaves the body in dreams or unconsciousness, and that in death it has not succeeded in getting back to the body in time. Dr. Brown says that the weapons and other belongings of the deceased are put near the corpse, so that the dead may have "the souls or spirits of these articles," and that at the funeral feasts the dead are believed to eat the spirits

of the articles of food. This seems to be an inference of his own. Dr. Codrington, in fact, after describing how they bury weapons and mats with a corpse, and even cut down the dead man's fruit-trees, adds: "They deny that they think that such things follow a man, in any ghostly form" (p. 263). Possibly both statements are correct, of different islands. It is part of the interest of the Melanesians that they exhibit, in the different localities, so many different phases of the making of religion. But we must particularly note that some peoples bury a dead man's weapons with him, yet deny that they think he needs them in a future life. It is in this case only a token of respect and affection. No one shall use the weapons, or enjoy the fruit-trees, of the dead. Travellers have been too apt to infer a belief in a future life from the burying of weapons. Dr. Brown himself says of the islanders he describes (p. 192): "Pigs are killed at all funerals, but this, I am sure, is only a mark of respect and as payment to those who assist at the services."

At death the soul begins a life which is differently conceived by different tribes, and we have to be on our guard against Polynesian influence in the east and Indian or Malay influence in the west. At the lower level the life after death is just a state of invisibility, but there is a tendency to locate it far away, and in one locality the dead are conceived as passing from hill to hill and finally "jumping off." This is a later and higher idea, and has probably been borrowed. The common belief is that the soul goes somewhere to meet its dead relatives, but

these may not welcome it, and it returns to its district. These dissatisfied souls—one supposes that they were in life the less amiable characters—become malignant, as does every man who has died a violent death. The soul of a man they had eaten was believed to be particularly malicious, and they shut the doors of the hut and closed their mouths while he was being cooked.

These malignant spirits, and a crowd of the usual malignant sorcerers, added terror to the life of the Melanesians; though in some places they had evolved, or (more probably) borrowed, a belief that such spirits were punished after death. It gives us the measure of their conception of what European writers always call "the spirit" when Dr. Brown tells us that this punishment after death was administered on the "spirit's" buttocks! The wicked soul might then return to earth and enter the body of an animal. The flying-fox was particularly apt to be animated by one of these spirits. The majority of the ghosts were, however, as good-natured as they had been during life, and the practical application of this belief gives us a large number of developing religious forms.

To the souls of common men little attention was paid, except by their own relatives. It was a universal practice to throw to the spirits bits of the yam or mallow one was eating, or to set apart a little food for them at a feast. Indeed, twice a year there was a sort of "All Souls Day," when the spirits were treated with generosity. Fundamentally, these were nature-festivals, as they were held

at the beginning of the yam season and the flying fish season. But the Melanesians are still in the phase of *mana* and the cult of personal spirits, and know nothing of a vegetation-force or a god of the sea, so that the festivals were directed to the ghosts of the dead. Individuals offered the first fruits of the earth or the sea to their own family ghosts. A man would put the food beside the skull of his father and naively say: "There is your bit." All prayers and invocations of a domestic nature had this simple and direct character. There were, however, also public celebrations in many places, at which a pig or a fish was sacrificed. There was no professional caste of either priests or sorcerers. Any man could acquire the skill, or purchase the art; but, since expertness gave him considerable power, he tended to become a chief, and we have therefore the common situation that it is the chiefs who usually offered sacrifice for the general good.

In view, however, of certain modern theories of the social origin of religion, or of the contention that magic is individual and religion social, we must notice that there is at this level just as much domestic as social religion, if not more. Every man has his own private cult, firstly of his immediate ancestors, secondly of some powerful spirit whom he has chosen as his guardian or protector. The family-spirits are naturally neglected after a time, as graves are in Europe; but every man is keen to have a guardian spirit, which may be incarnated in a snake or a fish. He may have inherited or purchased this good genius, and he

will readily discard it and get another if it proves ineffective. To this, as well as to the ghost of his father, he makes simple prayers and offers sacrifices. It must make his yams and mallows grow. If he is a fighting man, it must give him *mana* for the fray. In case of disease he will summon a skilled man to tell him which spirit caused the disease, and he will then himself offer up a pig or a dog as a substitute for the sick person. If the sick man dies, he must guard the body, or—as some think—the discontented spirits of the dead will come in the shape of hermit-crabs and devour it.

Social religion we found beginning at the Australian level, and it naturally increases with the social organization of the people and the tendency of the chiefs to be the leading sorcerers and rain-makers. While the ghosts of ordinary folk are soon forgotten, the ghost of a chief—who may be presumed to have been a masterful person, with plenty of *mana*—continues to hold public attention. A little house or shrine is built over his remains, and four carved images, roughly representing him and his relatives, are placed at the corners of it; a rudimentary beginning of temples and idols, though the figures are not worshipped. Codrington gives (p. 125) an instance of a well-known warrior at Florida thus securing honours which may be regarded as lifting him towards the rank of deities: and it is instructive to learn that at Florida all spirits are believed to be the shades of dead men. The living chief is, naturally, the proper person to offer sacrifices to, and communicate with, the powerful spirit of the dead

chief, and in places the people wait without while he is offering sacrifice in the little grave-house. We have the complete elements of a religious cult.

The same development occurs in another direction. One of the chief characteristics of the Melanesians is that they form powerful secret societies from which women are excluded. These may originally have been totemistic groups, but they are in any case a natural development of the Australian practice of a secret initiation of youths to manhood. They are to-day—when Melanesian religion is in decay—merely clubs, but formerly they were so rigorous that a woman could be raped or murdered if she attempted to penetrate the secrets. To-day every woman knows that the weird masks and cries with which the initiates used to terrify her were devices like those of the Australians and the Onas for maintaining the superiority of the male. These societies had lodges in secluded places, and in them were deposited a number of objects (images, curious stones, etc.) which were regarded as sacred. Thus we rise, in the direction of the temple, from the natural hiding-place in which the elders of an Australian tribe kept their bull-roarers to definite buildings (over chiefs' graves or for secret assemblies) which contain images and sacred stones, and may not be entered by women.

It may be useful to add that the exclusion of women does not seem to be grounded on any superstitious view of their sex features, but on their mental and physical inferiority. These societies hardened men for war, with which women were



not concerned. The sex element has nothing to do with religion until a later phase.

Finally, we must notice the tendency towards the creation of deities, or preponderating spirits. We have already seen that dead chiefs and warriors are always apt to rise to this position, and in some of the Pacific Islands even living individuals may obtain such quasi-divine honours. Sir J. G. Frazer quotes a case in the Marquesas Islands. An old man was kept in a sacred house and enclosure, which none but his servants might enter; and he could, and did, call for human sacrifices whenever he willed. Among the Melanesians even animals may be raised to this higher rank. Sharks, for instance, are believed to be possessed by spirits, and in places images of them are treated with great honour. We have in this a root of the worship of animal-gods which seems to have been distinct from totemism. Caves, springs, streams, the thunder and lightning and rain, are similarly regarded as embodying spirits.

As a consequence, we find that in most districts there is something approaching the character of a deity. In the western islands (Solomon Islands, etc.) men are chiefly concerned about the ghosts of the dead; in the eastern islands (New Hebrides and Banks—we must note that these are more exposed to Polynesian influence) the cult is directed rather to non-human spirits. Whether the latter were evolved from the former we cannot now say confidently, but there is ample evidence to suggest that view, as I have shown. However that may be, some



of these spirits are practically deities, in the sense in which that term is applied to the chief spirits of primitive religions. At San Christoval there is a cult of a certain Kahausibware, a snake-shaped, female spirit of supernatural power who lives on the mountains. She made men, pigs, and fruit-trees. A daughter of hers is also named. In the Banks Islands the popular quasi-deity is Qat, who is also conceived as the author of men and food, and as governing the seasons. He is not ■ "creator," but he, Dr. Codrington says, "added furniture to the world in which he was born" (which means that he was originally human). He has a family, and he is the hero of a number of legendary adventures. In the Solomon Islands sacrifice is made to a certain Harumae, who is clearly a deified native. The sacrifice is offered and his aid is invoked ("We give you pig—you help") in the little house over his remains, and the people tell that he was a very wise chief, with plenty of *mana*, of the last generation. In the Duke of York island the maker of men was Nora; in the Shortlands it was Tonutonu. All the evidence points to local quasi-deification of living persons.

We shall see in the next chapter how some of these gain predominance and become gods. In the Melanesian world the priest is as yet imperfectly developed. Sacrifice to the spirits is converting the wizard or the chief into what we may prefer to call a priest, but there is no organized body of priests. That will be the next step, which we shall see in Africa; and the priest will, for his own wealth or

aggrandizement, endeavour to obliterate the minor deities and impose his own great god. Even in Melanesia there is considerable fraud among both sacrificers and sorcerers.

Nature-worship is, as I have said, still in an elementary condition, if it may be said to exist at all. There is no vegetation-god; the wizards, sacrificers to spirits, and the use of objects containing *mana* influence the weather and the food. There are no deities of sky, sun, moon, fire, earth, or water. *Mana* is everywhere, but there is no tendency to pass from it to the animation of nature. But there is a universal belief that these elements of nature contain definite personal spirits, often plainly the ghosts of the dead, and in this we have the germ of nature-worship.

Of the neighbouring Polynesians it need only be said that they carry this religious development much higher. The disputed question of their origin need not be discussed here. Their culture is in every respect much superior to that of the Melanesians, and the people have at least a capacity of education which is equal to our own. Many scholars believe them to be the eastern branch of the Caucasian race, of which we Europeans are the western branch. Their capacity was singularly impressed upon me by an experience in Wellington (New Zealand). I had lectured on biological evolution, and a well-educated Maori, a qualified medical man, who had been among my audience, approached me, and said that his race had anticipated this Darwinian doctrine. He afterwards sent me, with the Maori original, the

following translation of one of their legends, which is easily superior, as a cosmic guess, to the first chapter of *Genesis* :—

The gentle air increasing  
 To the gentle breeze from abroad  
 The far-distant horizon—  
 Increasing in strength overhead  
 With a force to break the pinions of Rupe [the Moon-  
     god],

He, contending with moderate success  
 'Gainst the storm of hail from on high,  
 Anon folding his wings  
 Folding yet folding again,  
 Anon to flap and to flap,  
 Anon again to soar;  
 Soareth earthward the great bird of Rua [the Moon],  
 Striking yet soaring  
 After its own manner.

    The gentle air  
 Filling and governing sky-space and earth-space,  
 The divinely-consecrated treasure—  
 Which girdled the circle,  
 The circle of earth and of sea,—  
 Extinguish begat sealer-up [of fires primordial]  
 Sealer-up begat solid-matter,  
 Solid-matter begat Rising-tides [seas followed  
     solidification],  
 Rising-tides begat germs [life originates],  
 Germs begat Life-movement,  
 Life-movement begat the Jelly,  
 The Jelly begat the Clinger,  
 The Clinger begat the Stealer-abroad [independent  
     movement],  
 The Stealer-abroad begat segregating-life-clusters,

And revolvers adopting new forms  
And gradually separating.

The Evolution, hearken,

The Decay, hearken.

Begotten was the Delineator,

The Delineator begat the lightning shock,

Which, abiding with the sky-brain,

Begat the thunderer,

Which, abiding with Hiakai-tangata [demi-god],

Gave birth to—[Man]

Punga, Punga-nui, and Punga-taua.

We are evidently concerned with a much higher race in the Polynesians, and I touch only a few points on which they carry onward the religion of the lowly Melanesians. They have a word for "soul" (literally, "the thing that goes," or "acts"), distinct from "shadow"; but Dr. Brown tells us of a curious custom which suggests that soul and shadow were formerly one. When a man has met a violent death they spread a white cloth on the ground, and the first ant that crosses it is said to be the man's shadow and is buried with the corpse. They call a photograph a "shadow-catcher." After death the soul passes from hill to hill, and finally jumps off from the earth—an idea of ascent into heaven which occurs in several primitive religions. They bury slaves with a dead chief and sacrifice pigs; but, says Dr. Brown, "I do not think there was any idea of the souls accompanying the deceased to the spirit-land" (p. 220). The next world is much the same as this—a land of flowers and fruits.

There is little ancestor-worship left among the Polynesians, but the little that lingers in backward districts makes it "certain," Dr. Brown says, that they have passed from ancestor-worship to the cult of spirits. The ordinary ghosts of the dead are merely a nuisance. The Samoan fires guns to keep them away (as the uneducated European lights his candle). But there is evidence that at one time there was a family cult of ancestors. Gods are now so numerous that the other Polynesians used to call Samoa "godless," though it has a large number of these elementary deities. Temples and priesthood are developed beyond the Melanesian stage. There are purification ceremonies in which the priest sprinkles the people with coco-nut water. Magic is in decay. The wizard is now a priest, entering into communion with the gods and impressing the people by his convulsions and contortions when the god possesses him. Priesthood is, in fact, already priestcraft. Either by ventriloquism or with the aid of an assistant, the priest mystifies his dupes by producing the voice of the god from behind a screen. The profits of the priests are considerable, and they are very greedy. If a man who has a valuable canoe or mat comes to consult them, they announce that the god demands it, and they loudly threaten his anger if it is not surrendered. In fine, there is the beginning of an ethical element in the Polynesian religion. One of the surest ways to the favour of the gods is to confess one's moral irregularities; one of the things most to be dreaded is the anger of the gods.

In contrast to this advanced religion let me turn, in conclusion, to the primitive peoples—Melanesian with mixtures of other blood—of the Indian Ocean. Professor C. G. Seligmann has studied one branch of the Melanesians who have mingled with the Papuans (*The Melanesians of British New Guinea*; 1910), and he finds among them a relatively pure version of the Melanesian religion. The soul—the word is distinct from shadow in some tribes and not in others—leaves the body in dreams, and at the final separation of death passes to a shadowy duplication of this world. It lingers about the house, which is deserted, and it is easily offended and angry. Nature is full of good or bad ghosts, and, though in some regions there is “no cult of a superior being or of the heavenly bodies” and “no definite cult of ancestors or of the spirits of the dead” (p. 646), other tribes have a kind of veneration of the sun, moon, and morning star, or a belief in superhuman beings. In brief, it is Melanesian religion at various lowly stages of development.

Mr. H. Ling Roth, in his work *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* (1896), describes a more advanced stage, with Hindu adulterations. There are various maker-gods, with distinct names—“the rajahs of the spiritual world” he well calls them—then an order of secondary spirits who live on the hills, and finally the usual crowd of malignant spirits (women who died in childbirth, men who lost their heads in war, etc.) in the jungle or the waters. The Dyaks of Borneo are interesting on

account of their quasi-deification of a living Englishman, Sir James Brooke. He put an end to their oppression by the Malays and greatly befriended them, and they ascribed to him superhuman qualities. He could cure disease, and even bring the dead to life; and the very water in which he washed had magical properties.

We have a more elaborate study of the religion of the Bataks of Sumatra (*Die Religion der Batak*, by J. Warneck, 1909), which also has been influenced by India. Of the five gods three are of Hindu origin, and I will not dwell on them. It is of greater interest to learn that temples exist, in spite of Indian influence, only for the cult of ancestors, and that the gods are invoked only in conjunction with ancestors. We have now minor deities who are personifications of natural elements (the waters, the vegetation-force, thunder, etc.), and Warneck concludes that the personification first consisted in locating the spirits of ancestors in them. There is, however, not much cult of gods. The native leaves it to priests to sacrifice to them; he himself is more concerned about wizards and demons and ancestral spirits. There is a curious approach to monotheism in the fact that the native groups all the gods together in a vague common name, *Debata*, which may be translated "divinity."

There is also an idea akin to *mana*. The souls of men, animals, and plants are particles of a general "soul-stuff" (*tondi*), which flows from a store in another world; and the main concern of life is to get as much as possible of this *tondi*. It is believed

to be concentrated especially in the head, the blood, and the hair and nails; so the hair and nails are allowed to grow long, and the practice of head-hunting is directly inspired. *Tondi* is in a man's shadow, so one must not tread on it; it is in a girl's hair, so the lover puts some under his pillow in order that he may dream of her. The priest, the chief, and the warrior are full of *tondi*. It may, like the soul, leave the body in sleep, and you must not awaken a man suddenly because his *tondi* is absent and may not get back in time. It is absent from the body in illness, and the art of curing is to entice it back. It is richly stored in the hair and nails of the dead, and these relics are therefore venerated. It is strong in the tiger, and so rice is offered to that animal; and even the smith's iron or the fisher's boat has *tondi*. A great number of even popular European superstitions are illumined by it. Mr. A. C. Kruijt (*Het Animisme in den Indischen Archipel*, 1906) traces it throughout the Indian Archipelago, and describes all its extraordinary forms.

The soul, which is quite distinct from *tondi*, is identified with the shadow. It resents the enforced separation from the body, and is therefore generally malignant and must be propitiated: a naive conception which gives us a new light on the creation of demons. In its anger it is ever seeking to bring other souls into the vague world of darkness beyond the grave. The other world is but a thin and vanishing shade of this world, and the souls of common folk soon fade out of remembrance. The



ancestors of the richer natives, however, stand out longer among the dead, and in the course of time their descendants may ceremoniously raise them to a class of spirits which enjoys a special name and special honour. The entire religion of these Bataks is of great interest, and Warneck's careful study deserves closer attention than it has received.

## CHAPTER V

### THE LESSON OF AFRICA

THE main line of development which passes from level to level in the preceding chapter is so clear that little comment is needed. The reader is, I trust, convinced by the facts, to which I have added little or no speculation, that religion begins chiefly with a belief in man's duality (generally founded upon his shadow) and survival of death. Magic is a separate growth; and *mana* or *tondi* is a late generalization of the power which is exerted in magic, together with the ordinary power of strong men and spirits.

At each level we have studied, the belief in a shadow-part of man develops independently of these other beliefs. At the higher levels, where there is a more pronounced social inequality than in the primitive peoples, the rude notion of aristocracy is carried into the spirit-world. The shades of chiefs or other vigorous members of the tribe are credited with a superior power. There is a quite general belief that men are more powerful after death, and there is therefore a general tendency to regard the magic of the dead (or religion) as more effective than the magic of the living wizard. Priests—men with knowledge of spirits and skill in sacrificing to

them—tend to displace wizards, and, in their own interest, they help to give the larger form of deities to the spirits they consult or appease. Little shrines and images are put over the graves of the dead, and these are at first homes of the ghosts; but in the course of time the ghosts are located in the sun, the stars, the winds and rivers, and thus a long step is made towards nature-worship.

I turn now to Africa, to seek if the same development is found among the very varied and numerous peoples of that continent. Africa is a museum—indeed, a laboratory—of evolving religion. In modern times Mohammedanism and Christianity have distorted or obliterated native religions over large areas, but there remain primitive jungles of superstition so extensive, so varied, and so little altered that in the one continent we have twenty living phases of the early development of religion. We have here, therefore, an admirable opportunity of testing the view of that development which the preceding chapters have suggested to us.

I have already described the religious beliefs and practices of the most primitive races of Africa. The Pygmies, we saw, represent one of the first waves of human distribution, but they taught us little. They are imperfectly known, and they have borrowed much from surrounding tribes. The Bushmen represent a slightly higher, yet a primitive, race, and we learned much from their naive legends and practices. Next to these come the Hottentots, who are generally admitted to be a hybrid outcome of a fusion of Bushmen and Bantu tribes. Their religion

is, consequently, not a natural growth of the type we seek, and I will not linger over it. The curious will find a good account of it in Dr. Theal's *Yellow and Dark-Skinned People of Africa south of the Zambesi* (1910). Like the Bushmen, or in virtue of their Bushman origin, they pay great regard to the mantis and the caddis-worm; like the Bantu, they offer sacrifices to dead ancestors, and have some degree of nature-worship. Their "god" (as described by missionaries) Tsui Goab is plainly said by them to be the ancestor of the Bushmen (though often identified with the moon). He is the common type of savage superman, the hero of a hundred mythical exploits; and the worship of him "consisted in throwing a branch of a tree, a bit of wood, or an additional stone upon a cairn at a place where he was supposed to have been buried" (p. 81). This is but a faint advance upon Bushman religion, and need not detain us.

The remaining peoples of Africa have been arranged by our anthropologists in a scheme of classification which is generally accepted. There are Hamite peoples in the north, but as these have all been long since converted to Mohammedanism we will leave them out of account. Their native religion is laboriously reconstructed by scholars, and it does not offer features of special interest to us. The great body of the population, the Negroes, are then divided—apart from a few tribes of mixed Hamite and Negro descent—into Sudanese and Bantu. The Sudan region seems to have been the original home of the blacks, but a part of them

moved down towards Uganda, mingled with Hamites and Negrilloes, and became the widespread Bantu. The culture of the Sudanese or Nilotic Negroes is purer, and we will begin with an examination of some of these Sudanese blacks of the west coast.

Mr. D. Macdonald (*Africana*, 1882), a missionary whose work is still valuable, long ago summed up the various religions of Africa in the phrase: "The spirits of the dead are the gods of the living." Mr. Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* was, as I said, based too narrowly on that work; and, even as regards the Africans, it paid too little attention to the Bushmen, and did not sufficiently take into account the comparative lateness of the Negroes. Yet our wider research has confirmed the main proposition of the theory of Herbert Spencer and Grant Allen, and we shall find that the very considerable research that has been made among the Africans since 1882 generally supports Mr. Macdonald's statement. Dr. A. H. Keane, for instance, writes:—

Ancestor-worship appears to be the most outstanding feature of all African primitive religious systems. That the spirits of the dead are the gods of the living is a formula that applies equally to the Sudanese natives of Upper Guinea and to the Bantu populations of Uganda, the eastern coast land and Damaraland. Among the Gold and Slave Coast peoples there are many local and general personifications of the powers of nature; but these were held in slight esteem compared with the ancestral gods to whom hecatombs of human beings were immolated at the periodical "customs" during

the flourishing days of the kingdoms of Ashanti, Dahomi, and Benin. It was the same in Uganda, where the former kings of the national dynasty were revered as demi-gods.<sup>1</sup>

A second generalization of Dr. Keane is that in Africa there is everywhere a "clear line of demarcation" between religion and ethics, and it is "plainly seen how religion and morals belonged originally to two different orders of thought." This we have already seen in every case except that of the Polynesians, who are later and more advanced than even the highest of the Africans. But we will examine a few of the valuable special studies of African tribes, beginning with the purer blacks of the equatorial west coast.

The most penetrating and illuminating of these for our purpose are three works of Mr. A. B. Ellis on the Sudanese natives of the Gold and Slave Coasts. In the first (*The Tshi-Speaking Peoples of the Gold Coast of West Africa*, 1887) Mr. Ellis studies the lowest of these Sudanese blacks, including the Fanti and Ashanti, and gives us a very interesting account of their religion. That they (and all the peoples we will henceforth examine) have a conviction of man's duality and survival may be taken for granted. The interest lies rather in the way in which nature-worship and the cult of gods emerge from the primitive religious level. The

<sup>1</sup> In Hastings's *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics* (1908), article "Africa," I, 163. A masterly survey of African religions is given in the same Dictionary by Mr. E. S. Hartland under the heading "Bantu."

spirits with which these tribes people their environment are generally malignant; Mr. Ellis, in fact, thinks that originally they were all malignant. They are therefore especially located in any element of nature that threatens the life of man—in the stormy sea, the devouring river or lake, the dangerous forest, disease, or the ground that rumbles in earthquake—and must constantly be propitiated, even with human sacrifices. This great swarm of local quasi-deities means a swarm of priests, for with the sacrificer priesthood may be said definitely to begin; and one of the most interesting points in Mr. Ellis's works is the way in which he shows how this reacts upon the development of religion.

Among the backward Tshi-speaking blacks the priests are not organized as much as in the later Bantu peoples, but they are a powerful caste, of both sexes. They undergo a rigorous training, and they afterwards differ from the other natives in dress and various ways. They are liberally paid, for the spirit-world grows in power and terror as man grows; and the priests and priestesses rigorously insist upon a monopoly of the sacrifices, except in regard to a class of private spirits which we will see presently. As we should expect, the belief in the malignant power of the spirits is "stedfastly kept up by the priests and priestesses for their own ends" (p. 15).

Under this new influence, as well as the natural tendencies which we have previously studied, the spirits are gathered into a kind of hierarchy which easily becomes polytheism, and will ultimately

evolve into monotheism. Mr. Ellis divides the spirits into four classes: the deities or spirits which are generally worshipped, the greater spirits of particular localities, the special spirits of associations or families, and the spirits which individuals (as in Melanesia) choose as their personal guardians. We are told that the third and fourth classes are "clearly the product and result of priestcraft" (p. 18). Mr. Ellis later admits that even the deities may have won their pre-eminence by the same means, and in his succeeding works we shall see this more plainly. The great "god" is Bobowissi, the lord of the sky and the rain, the being who vents his anger in thunder, lightning, and the storm. The sun is not worshipped, though it is possessed by a spirit; but there is evidence of some earlier cult of the moon. The large second class consists of nature-spirits of importance, from which, it is clear, the priests make deities of the first class. Two are named by Mr. Ellis which were for a time lifted higher than Bobowissi, yet sank back to the lower position.

These spirits of the first and second class, however, are too far away to command the feverish attention of the natives. They receive sacrifices, but it is the minor spirits, ever close at hand and interested in men, who fill the black's mind. These are no longer dead kinsmen or gifted individuals who were known and revered. The priests, as mouthpieces of the gods, appoint them. The family or the individual sets up a wooden image, a curious stone, or even a calabash, and the priest or priestess secures that a spirit will enter it. They are freely discarded



and replaced by others when they do not discharge their functions properly; as the Irish peasant may replace one patron saint and blessed statue by another in the same circumstances. Apart from these private patrons, however, the layman must not attempt to practise religious rites. The priest or priestess alone can commune with spirits of the first three classes, and the pretence is supported by a good deal of imposture. When the god is supposed to enter him, the priest acts as if he were in convulsions and produces froth at the mouth by a trick. The messages he gives are as ambiguous as those of the oracle of Delphi, and a false prophecy is glibly explained as a deliberate mark of the anger of the spirit. Sleight of hand, ventriloquism, and other means of deception are freely used.

Mr. Ellis concludes from the language that the idea of a spirit is founded upon dreams, swoons, and trances; and he is confident that the innumerable spirits were originally the ghosts of dead men. There is, however, an advance in speculation. A man has two invisible elements, of which one is reincarnated after death and the other becomes a wandering ghost. Animals and trees and "inanimate" objects also have ghosts, or shadow-parts, and the human spirit is supposed to take the spirits of the food or weapons that are buried with the corpse. The next life is still a mere shadowy counterpart of this.

When we pass to the Slave Coast (*The Ewe-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*, 1890), where there has been more inter-

change of ideas, we find a slightly higher level. The Dahomi belong to this group. It is significant that the chief change, as regards religion, is a beginning of the organization of the priests and priestesses which is promptly reflected in the cult. The local gods or popular spirits become less numerous, and the great gods, or higher spirits, are more widely and uniformly accepted. "Doubtless this consensus in ideas has been brought about by the priesthood," says Mr. Ellis. A man is still free to choose his gods, but the priests are better organized, similar deities in different localities blend into one, and the more powerful cults displace those which have no strong priesthood. The spirits are now detached from particular localities, or at least local cults are on the decline, and have "no tangible abode." Mr. Ellis suggests that the priests have told the natives that the god has entered the image of him set up in the shrine, and men need go no longer to the lake or river to propitiate him.

Many chief gods have been manufactured in this way. At the head of them, in a sense, is Mawu (the word means also sky and rain); but he is a drowsy, remote, indifferent being, to whom they rarely pray or sacrifice. He sends rain, however, and is regarded as generally good-natured. We shall see that this is a typical African conception of a supreme being. Perfect bliss is to the natives a place where one may slumber through the summer heat. Why should a great god fuss about mortal concerns? More important in practice is the god of lightning, a bird-like creature who lives in the

thunder-clouds. When a hut has been struck, the priests and priestesses ("wives of god") find among the ruin a flint arrow, which they have fraudulently put there, in proof of the "act of god." The third deity is a new and interesting appearance in our study. It is a phallic deity, the inspirer of the erotic dreams which the native loves; and its naked emblem is everywhere. There are, in addition, gods of fire, of small-pox, of the rainbow, of trees, of the markets, and of twins. We now, in other words, find animistic speculation taking a larger part. The python, the crocodile, and the leopard; the ocean, the sun, and the various elements of nature: all have their major or minor spirits. There is still some cult of ancestors, and in the royal house of Dahomi this is an important element of religion, inspiring hideous human sacrifices (since the kings must have servants in the other world). But the broad characteristic is that the interests of the priests and the developing imagination of man are raising the cult of a few gods to a position of predominance.

In his third work Mr. Ellis takes us further east (*The Yoruba-Speaking Peoples of the Slave Coast of West Africa*, 1894), where we find a still higher Sudanese group. Here the tendency we have just studied is carried further. The local spirits have generally sunk to the position of sprites or fairies; the great spirits are the gods of all. The somnolent sky-and-rain god now has an active assistant (probably a rival god who could not be suppressed), whom it is important to propitiate. The erotic

deity, "The Black One," is now a woman, the wife of the preceding, and is—significantly enough—the goddess of the earth. We are moving towards the divine dynasties of later religions. Myths and family-trees of gods abound, testifying to the advance of the priests. Each striking element of nature still has its lesser deity, and the world is peopled with gods rather than disembodied ghosts. Man is now believed to have three spiritual elements, and the land to which his chief "soul" goes is underground.

These penetrating studies illustrate for us the evolution of animism and polytheism out of a belief in ghosts, and they are especially valuable in their frank description of the influence and fraud of the priests. Born of a fraudulent generation, the medicine men and magicians, the priests continue the mixture of superstition and deceit, and they make spirits into gods in their own very plain interest. Few travellers, and no missionaries, so candidly reveal this element in the making of religion, though it is a general factor. It is at once more enlightening and more substantial than the mythical "religious instinct" or "instinct of monotheism." Man makes spirits, but priests make gods.

Three other special studies of the Sudanese Negroes may be noticed briefly. Mr. P. A. Talbot (*In the Shadow of the Bush*, 1912) gives us an interesting account of the Ekoi of Nigeria. Here two great deities, the sky-god Obassi Osaw and the earth-god Obassi Nsi, rise above the crowd of nature-

spirits, animal-spirits, and ghosts. The former is now conceived as malignant, spitting his heat and lightning at men and rejecting (since they fall down when thrown towards the sky) their offerings. Obassi Nsi is more genial. He lives underground, and does not cast up the offerings that are put on the ground for him. There is evidence that "he" was once conceived as female. But the demi-gods of nature are of greater practical importance than either, and the black's world—the trees and stones, the lakes, rivers, and bush—teems with these active Njomm. The ghosts of the dead have, however, some influence over these, and they have therefore not fallen out of consideration.

In two works (*At the Back of the Black Man's Mind*, 1906, and *Nigerian Studies*, 1910) Mr. R. E. Dennett seeks to penetrate more deeply into the dim recesses of the Negro's religious life; but I find the earlier work unilluminating, and the latter discusses the Yoruba, whose religion we have studied. It is, however, interesting to find that Mr. Dennett is impressed by the relation of the lingering ancestor or ghost-worship to the developed nature-religion. "The Yoruba," he says (p. 58), "seem to connect ideas with which they surrounded natural phenomena with personages whose characters seemed to them to fit in with these impressions, and then on the death of these persons to have deified them and gradually to have looked upon them as the cause of the effects produced by these natural phenomena." The spirits of the dead, we see again, are the gods of the living; and Mr. Dennett adds that much of

the deification is due to the conception of the spirit-world as analogous to the complicated royal court of the Yoruba.

When we turn from the Sudanese to the Bantu blacks, of the southern part of the continent, we find, as a rule, a less pure native culture, but we still have very interesting glimpses of the making of religion. Let us begin with Sir Harry Johnston's survey in his *Uganda Protectorate* (1902). The tribes of the western province have been profoundly influenced by the Bahima, a Hamitic people, but it is curious to find that this branch of the highest African family is not very advanced in religion. The Bahima, Sir Harry Johnston says, "have no very clear idea of an over-ruling God" (p. 631), though there seems to be a vague cult of a sky-and-rain god, as on the western coast. There is some cult of ancestors, though "little definite belief in a future life." Sir Harry Johnston seems to use the terms relatively. We have here a familiar stage of religion: a belief in survival, a special cult of the ghosts of chiefs, and an incipient belief in a sky-god. A point of special interest is that the destructive fruit-bat is much mixed up with the native idea of evil spirits. We have frequently seen how some striking animal of a particular locality soon becomes associated with the idea of spirits.

If the superior Bahima are thus at a relatively low stage of religious development, we shall not expect any remarkable advance among the Bantu they have influenced. The Bakonjo, Sir Harry says, practise a vague ancestor-worship, "but they do not

appear to have any actual religion or belief in gods as distinct from ghosts and ancestral influences" (p. 578). The Banyoro have a definite and assiduous cult of ancestors, and they have very numerous priests or sorcerers. It appears that at the birth of a child "a priest or sorcerer" invokes the ancestral spirits to give it a long life, "and above all that it may be a faithful believer in the tribal and ancestral spirits" (p. 587). We have already seen this professional concern; and we have another link with the (Catholic) priest of to-day in the fact that part of the black priest's business in this primitive sort of baptism is to spit on the babe. A Catholic priest touches a baby with his spittle or saliva. Another interesting point is that the thunder, which is in these parts very violent, is interpreted by the priests as a sign of the anger of a powerful ancestral spirit, and he must be propitiated in a public ceremony. It is a stage in the making of the sky-god.

In the kingdom of Uganda the tribes are all Bantu, but the proximity of Hamites has influenced them, and Christianity has recently displaced much of the native religion. The Baganda are now Christian, but their original cult is easily gathered, and it is an interesting type of African development. The basic element was ancestor-worship, and the Baganda still build little huts near the grave. There had, however, been the customary advance towards nature-religion, and thirty-seven spirits were especially named and associated with the lightning, the hurricane, the earthquake, battle, water, rain, small-pox, etc. Each had his shrines and priests.



In the neighbouring Basoga this primitive religion is still preserved ; and it is interesting to note that, besides human sacrifices to the spirits of trees and waters, the natives had a special spirit or quasi-deity who was responsible for the birth of twins. This peculiar religious regard for twins, which is common in Africa and America, must be remembered in conjunction with later myths. At the primitive level it means that, if each birth of a prospective soldier or mother of soldiers is a happy event, the simultaneous birth of two is a marvel of beneficence. A third tribe, the Kavirondo, have the same cult ; and in their case Sir Harry Johnston observes that they believe, apparently, that the souls of chiefs alone survive death.

The remaining tribes of the Protectorate are said to be hybrid offshoots of the Sudanese blacks, and their religion may be summed up as a vague cult of a sky-god and of spirits embodied in trees, serpents, etc., with a background of ancestor-worship. Among the Jalus we find the interesting and exceptional fact that the deity is identified with the sun, which otherwise occupies a surprisingly low position in African nature-religion. Among the Masai the name for the god is also (as is customary) the name for the sky, and it is said to be sometimes used for rain. He is invoked during a drought. The tribesmen say that there were originally four gods, but two were killed by the other two, and a third died. This seems to point to the customary struggle of cults which leads on towards monotheism. These Masai do not believe that the souls



of women or of common men survive the grave, and they imagine that surviving souls enter black snakes, which are accordingly revered.

Mr. A. C. Hollis (*The Masai*, 1905) has given us a special study of this interesting people. They have, he says, two "thunder-gods"—a good Black god and a malignant Red god. The Black deity blesses the earth with rain and checks the other spirit. The roar of thunder means that the Red deity is trying to break from the sky to injure men, and the gentler rumble at the close of a storm is the mild "Let them alone" of the genial and somnolent Black god. There are also a semi-divine being who (like the Logos of early Christianity) was deputed to arrange the world, a prominent demon, and a host of spirits in the elements of nature. The Masai pray to Eng-di for rain, children, and victory in war; and they invoke the sun, moon, morning and evening star, and the clouds on the mountain tops. Mr. Hollis says that their language is so vague—Eng-di may be either the striking natural phenomena themselves or a superhuman power behind them—that one cannot confidently say if these are relics of a former cult of the heavenly bodies or stages in the evolution of a great nature-deity. On the analogy of other African religions, we may conclude that they are stages in an onward evolution.

A neighbouring and cognate tribe, the Nandi, is studied in a more recent work of Mr. Hollis (*The Nandi*, 1909). Their chief deity, Asis, is the sun; the name itself is the ordinary word for "sun."

He is a benevolent deity, the maker of men and beasts; and the Nandi offer a kind of prayer to him every morning. We must not, however, hastily conclude that Asis is a direct personification of the sun, much as we may be disposed to expect the brilliant orb of tropical Africa to obtain that honour. Mr. Hollis points out that the attributes of Asis in the native belief are not solar, and he is inclined to regard him as a later addition to a primitive natural cosmogony. I will return to the point later. There are, in addition, two thunder-gods and the customary crowd of spirits, good and evil, in nature. The soul is identified with the shadow, and, except in the case of children, it survives death and passes to a world underground. Earthquakes are caused by the movements of these souls in the subterraneous world.

The Bangala of the Upper Congo are described by the Rev. J. H. Weeks,<sup>1</sup> and it is possible that in their case we have a purer and more primitive form of the black religion. One of the words which they apply to ghosts means "shadow" (either the dark shadow or the reflection in water), and they think that at death a soul passes for a time to some vaguely imagined world of shades, and then returns to infest the bush or the creek. The wicked remain wicked, and their enhanced or superhuman power causes much terror. Certain natives have the gift of seeing and communicating with them, and at times slaves are entrusted with messages to them and dispatched to the other world. There is a

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, XI, 1910, pp. 368-381.

“creator” and great god named Libanza, but “it is not at all improbable that Libanza is the name of some great chief who delivered the people” (p. 375). The original name for the ghost-world means “up river,” though their home is now said to be the sky; and Mr. Weeks makes the interesting conjecture that, as the natives explored “up river” and found that the region contained merely men like themselves, they shifted the habitat of ghosts to the unexplorable sky.

These special studies which I have chosen from the large literature about African tribes will suffice for my purpose, but before I summarize the results it is expedient to glance at Mr. E. S. Hartland’s excellent survey of Bantu religion.<sup>1</sup> His generalizations are of such value that I propose to reproduce a few of them.

All African tribes believe explicitly in survival (though some, we saw, do not ascribe souls to children, women, or common folk), but there is considerable difference of opinion about the destination of the soul. The belief that the ghosts pass underground is not, perhaps, nearly so general as Mr. Hartland seems to suggest; and I may recall that it is here and there apparently based upon gravitation. Many tribes, we saw, locate the ghosts in the sky, and probably most of them regard the dead as wandering in the region or skulking in the bush. Many others think that they are reincarnated in animals. The Zulus see them in the buffalo, the

<sup>1</sup> Article “Bantu,” in the *Dictionary of Ethics and Religion*.

lizard, and the hippopotamus. The Matabele fancy that the dead enter lions and elephants. Others look for them in hyenas and crocodiles; and many, as we saw, in black snakes or in trees.

A special interest attaches to the position of the African chief. He is, says Mr. Hartland, during life "the focus of superstition.....the high-priest of his people." It is by no means a universal practice for the chief to have the monopoly of bringing rain or success in war, but we saw that a wizard or priest who is considered very gifted in this respect tends to become chief. In death the chief becomes even more important. The hut or kraal or special plot in which he is buried takes on a sacred character, and very frequently little houses (shrines) and wooden images are raised over or near the remains. His ghost is in many places addressed as "Father," his aid is invoked, and his deeds are genially exaggerated. In the higher tribes, especially where the chief has become a king, even human sacrifices are offered to him. In many places, also, we get the first germ of the superstition of perpetual fire which lingers in Romanism to-day. In many Bantu communities the chief, for general convenience, maintains a fire day and night in or near his hut, frequently entrusting the charge of it to an unmarried daughter. At his death it is extinguished for a time and then ceremoniously re-lit.

In connection with the question of "god" Mr. Hartland examines very instructively the various great beings of the Bantu tribes. The Unkulunkulu of the Zulus—the other central and south-eastern

tribes have a corresponding being—"simply means," he says, "the most remote ancestor known to a tribe or a clan." Unkulunkulu is surely their "great-great-grandfather," and has no providential functions. The Morima of other central tribes is "beyond doubt" an ancestral spirit. The Mukura of the Herreros is a word which they use also for "a deceased father or person of importance." Among the northern tribes the name Mulungu, which missionaries translate "god," is an impersonal collective name for the spirits of the dead, though it has often—as when thunder is said to be the voice of Mulungu—a personal shade of meaning.<sup>1</sup> In the west Nzambi is the great figure, but the real meaning of the name is unknown. Some regard Nzambi as the sun; some speak of him as "our father" or "maker." He is, at all events, a sleepy and indifferent overlord, a "relatively Supreme Being."

In fine, Mr. Hartland draws our attention to a distinction of some importance in connection with this developing idea of a god. The grandfather-god, Unkulunkulu, the tolerably transparent ancestor, belongs to the nomadic and warlike tribes of the central and southern regions. Nzambi, the overlord or sky-god, who is not so clearly ancestral, is the deity of the settled agricultural tribes of the Lakes and the west. Mr. Hartland thinks that the

<sup>1</sup> In discussing the same name "H. B. B." says: "It seems impossible to doubt that the earliest worship of the Bantu peoples was ancestor-worship of a simple sort; little more, in fact, at first than the continuing to pay to a departed chief the reverence and honour that belonged to him when alive" (*Man*, 1907, No. 77).

tribes may be two separate branches of the Bantu. What is more important is to notice that the latter tribes, being settled tillers of the soil, are higher in culture than the former, so that the relative position is entirely in harmony with the view that the sky-god is a glorified ancestor of long ago who has lost the traces of his human parentage.

We are therefore now in a position to see how the religions of Africa confirm or correct the view of the origin of religion which the earlier chapters suggested to us. Beyond question the basic element of all African religion, and all religion we have yet examined, is the belief that something in man survives the grave. Magic is equally developed, but neither here nor elsewhere do we find it preceding or outstripping religion, or yielding to it because its futility is discovered. Equally certain is it that man begins with the personal spirit, not an impersonal nebosity. Only in more advanced tribes do we find the innumerable spirits occasionally summarized in a collective name which may be taken to mean supernatural or spiritual influence. The concrete spirits of the dead come first. That is the thesis of all our authorities on Africa. How this idea of a human spirit—I use the word for convenience, though there is nothing “spiritual” about the savage conception—was attained we could not expect to learn from the Negroes, who are an advanced people; but wherever we have found a clue in their language it has confirmed the belief that the shadow (dark or coloured) was the first phenomenon to suggest it.

In this respect the Negroes confirm our earlier conclusions, and in their further speculations we see a steady development of the primitive belief. The growing belief in a plurality of souls may be disregarded here, as it is not a vital element. I take it that this belief is an attempt to explain more fully the puzzling features of life. It is chiefly in regard to the destination of the soul that religion advances in Africa, on its speculative side. The lower tribes agree with our earlier peoples, that the shades lurk in the surroundings and are apt to be malignant. As the tribes rise in intelligence, however, we find a growing tendency to locate the shades more definitely. Some embody them in trees—a disposition which Dr. Keane connects with the early practice of burying a corpse under the shade of a tree. Others, attributing great vitality and (generally) malevolence to them, think that they are embodied in the snake, the python, the tiger, the crocodile, and so on. These speculations begin the animation of nature, which proceeds rapidly. The torrent, the lake, the dangerous surf, the volcano, and the lightning become vehicles of spirits; and the process goes on until the sun and moon and stars, and almost all the elements of nature, hold definite spirits.

Meantime, however, two fundamental elements of nature, the earth and the sky, have attracted attention. These large generalizations are beyond the primitive mind of our earlier peoples, but the African is alive to this leading division of his universe. We must remember that to the savage



the sky is not a remote over-arching vault. It seems to him to touch the earth a few miles away, and overhead the birds may possibly reach it. Clouds drift over it, and the fierce energy of the lightning shoots from it, and the sun and moon and stars travel in it. He, as usual, puts spirits as the source of these energies, and begins the population of sky-land. Among some of the higher tribes it becomes the general home of the shades of the dead. They are at least safe there from sceptical search. Others, probably starting from the fact that they have buried their fellows in the earth, put the spirit-world underground. The rumbling of the ground in earthquakes seems to some to confirm this; while others see in the force which we call gravitation a sort of stretching of ghostly, invisible hands from a spirit-world below.

Thus religion gets its two alternative suggestions of a sky-land and a nether region, a heaven and a hell. At the same time gods are being evolved out of the population of ghosts, just as chiefs are evolved out of the originally equal human population. Africa strongly confirms the view, which we based upon Melanesia, Australia, and the simpler peoples, that the chief root of this development is the fact that spirits are unequal in life and will remain unequal after death. In the universal savage opinion, a chief remains a chief; a great chief remains a great chief. The historic figures, therefore, about whom legends of almost superhuman deeds grow, stand out amid the quickly fading crowd of the common dead. Whole generations may pass into oblivion while their memory lives. They become "our great-great-



grandfathers," our makers, the givers of our culture. Since they made rain during life, they may make it still. They become sky-and-rain gods, and may lose the human shape.

The evidence from all parts of Africa seems to point to this development, but there is no magical value in a single simple theory of origins, and we must look carefully for other influences. There is no evidence whatever that the sun and moon were directly personified and turned into gods or goddesses. Indeed, the commencement of vague awe of these great elements of nature, which we found among lowly peoples, develops very little. Only one or two African tribes put their chief spirit in the sun or moon; and even in these cases the spirit is simply lodged there. So with the earth-spirit. Most of the African tribes put personal spirits in trees or waters, but it is only a few of the higher tribes who reach the idea of a general earth-spirit, a goddess of fecundity. The phallic spirit is equally late. Nor can we say very definitely that fear made the gods. Most of the chief deities of the Africans are not feared. They are drowsy, lazy, good-natured, very big black fellows; prosperous and eupeptic chiefs.

The gods or semi-gods of the Africans seem, on the whole, to be magnified dead men. Human shreds and patches cling to them everywhere. It is, of course, quite true that if the natives *made* a god, instead of merely elevating an ancestor to that rank, he would be human. It is a plausible theory that they thought the other world must have its

chiefs as well as this, and so they made chiefs (or gods). But the weakness of the theory is that there was no need whatever to *invent* chiefs of the spirit-world. Every chief that died remained a chief, and was honoured as such.

A more real influence in the making of gods out of dead ancestors is, we saw, the influence of the priests. We must not, however, take this too narrowly. Priest and wizard blend together in early stages; but I am assuming that the *priestly* function is to propitiate and consult spirits, especially by sacrifice, and this work soon has its special caste. At once there arises a great rivalry between priest and wizard, because their methods of earning advantages or dispelling disease are radically distinct, though often blended. The priest insists on the power of spirits and the urgent need to pay him to propitiate them. As the development of the spirit-world advances—as the ghosts of the dead are located in special regions or phenomena—priests attach themselves to the service of one or other of these spirits. Local conditions give exceptional popularity to one spirit and exceptional terror to another. The cult grows, and the priests grow; and then we have the beginning of the struggle for life among the cults and priesthoods. We saw this very plainly on the Slave and Gold Coasts. But we see it so plainly even in the most advanced cities of our own world to-day that I need not enlarge on it. When spirits have reached a certain stage of prominence or popularity this influence has probably been the most effective in the world in evolving

polytheism out of nature-worship and monotheism out of polytheism.

The evolution of temples and rites and myths continues simultaneously. The making of myths is not at first a function of priests, but we saw (in connection with the Slave Coast) how they apply themselves to it when the need arises. When a popular spirit cannot be destroyed he is adopted, and some legend or other makes him a relative of the great god. The development of ritual and temple cannot be discussed in this small work. In Africa the temple seems to have grown out of the little house built over the grave, or the house in which a chief was buried. We saw, however, in earlier chapters that this is not the single germ of the temple. Houses are built for sacred sharks, crocodiles, stones, serpents, and so on. But I must avoid these secondary religious elements, and pursue the main line of inquiry.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RELIGIONS OF AMERICA

IN the present chapter I propose to examine another continent in the manner in which we have surveyed Africa. No one could be more sensible than I of the imperfectness of this method of procedure. The ideal is to arrange all the peoples of the earth in an anthropological scale, according to the state of their culture, and pursue the religious inquiry steadily from the Veddah and Tasmanian and Yahgan up to the modern European. But the magnitude of such a task places it beyond my range of opportunity, and the most profitable and sound procedure for the kind of sketch that I am attempting seems to be to take the peoples of the earth by regions and see how religion ascends the scale of development among the varied peoples of each region. In this way we leave no interesting people out of account, and we obtain a very satisfactory view of the real historical development.

The design has another advantage. Once the earliest races of men had scattered, the evolution of ideas and institutions proceeded independently in many parts of the world. Along the great highway of the Indian Ocean, we saw, isolated development is rare, but on the great continents

groups of peoples have evolved with considerable independence. The blacks of Australia exhibited to us a native development almost as peculiar as the animal life of that continent. The Negroes of Africa have not been suffered to develop in so complete an isolation, but the Hamitic influence did not impose upon them a much higher religion, and in most cases we have studied a purely African development. In America the isolation has, since a very early period, been more rigorous. In Asia we shall find at least a considerable measure of independence. Thus we may profitably divide the earth into separated areas of religious development and study how far man has followed similar lines of religious evolution in independent surroundings.

We have already examined the elementary religious life of the most primitive peoples of America, the Yahgans of Tierra del Fuego, and certain tribes of the Brazilian forests. These lowly peoples are now generally regarded as the remnants of an extremely early human family which passed from Europe to America over a bridge of which Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands represent the crumbling piers to-day. Among the more isolated of these peoples, the Yahgans, we found almost no traces of religion; and among the Brazilians religion (in so far as it is a native development) is little more than the primitive belief in survival.

The remaining peoples of America do not represent a development from this lower stock, but probably a later invasion by the Behring Strait route. In what is called the Mesozoic Period there

was a broad land-connection, or continent, between western Europe and eastern America, in the northern part of what is now called the Atlantic Ocean. This continent disappeared in the Tertiary Period, but it is assumed that a strip of it remained sufficiently long to enable the primitive population of Europe to send a branch into America. Hence such peoples as the lowly Yahgans and Botocudos. The remaining American peoples show by their language and culture that they come from a common stock, and the root of this stock is sought in Asia. The shorter land-connection of Asia and America would last longer, or the passage of the Strait would offer little difficulty. This stream of immigration poured into the Arctic the various peoples whom we call Eskimo, but the main current passed over America and became the Amerinds, who in time evolved the native civilization of the Mayas, the Aztecs, and the Peruvians. Within the one family, therefore, and quite independently of the rest of the world, we have a considerable development of religion, culminating in a system which is in many respects akin to Roman Catholicism.

Some 27,000 Eskimo still linger in the dark fringe of the Arctic, and largely preserve for us a primitive form of the American religion. Many of them believe that man has two souls, one of which is reincarnated at death, while the other passes to the usual vaguely conceived land of shades. The general belief is that every human being is at birth endowed with a certain measure of vital energy, and that death—which so many lower races cannot

regard as natural—merely marks the exhaustion of this store of energy. If an ailing person is old, they make no effort to prolong life. They believe, however, as most other peoples do, that the spirit is after death endowed with more power than during life, and, since a large proportion of the ghosts are malicious, their life is overshadowed by the fear of the invisible dead. A professional priest or medicine-man, the *angakok*, who has to endure a very severe training, conducts the intercourse with the spirits, but there is no form of worship. In case of illness, for instance, he must induce the spirits to lead or send back to the body the soul of the particular organ which is diseased; for each part of the body has a soul, and illness means that the soul of an organ has gone away.

The spirits are graduated in a hierarchy such as we find in all relatively advanced peoples. At the base is the common crowd of ghosts of the dead who hover about the homes of the living. At the head are a number of gods or quasi-gods. The chief of these is Tornassuk, a not very sharply conceived ruler of the good spirits. The food supply and the storms (which affect the food supply) are believed to be under the control of a quaint kind of goddess—an old woman who lives at the bottom of the seas, and who is the maker of seals and walruses, in the childish sense that her father long ago cut off sections of her fingers, and these became the Eskimo's eatable animals. Many tabus are appointed in her name, and a dearth of seals or arrival of storms means that some one has aroused

her anger by violating the tabus. It is the duty of the *angakok* to discover the offender and compel him to confess. The Eskimo believe that the animals they hunt will become invisible if they do not obey the priest—a naive foundation of priestly power.

Some of the Eskimo tribes put a second glorified old woman in the sky and credit her with sending the rain by shaking a mat drenched with urine. Others make a kind of deity, or deified man, of the moon, which is regarded as a mighty hunter with a house and weapons in the sky. There are, in addition, various animal-human spirits which mediate between the *angakok* and the great spirits. In a word, we have here a common type of religion evolved from the primitive belief in survival. There is no positive evidence that the higher spirits are the shades of ancestors, nor need we look for such a development in the case of every god; but the belief is concerned entirely with personal spirits, and there is nothing to prevent one from thinking that all were originally the spirits of the dead.

In passing to the Amerinds proper I will, as in the case of Africa, consider first a few monographs on special tribes or groups of tribes. Of these one of the most lucid and instructive is Sir E. F. Im Thurn's *Among the Indians of Guiana* (1883). It is curious that one of the tribes of this region, the Macusis, have fixed their attention upon the small figure of a man (oneself) which one sees in the pupil of a man's eye, and they have identified this with the soul. "His spirit has gone," they say of



the dead man, because his eye no longer reflects the beholder. But this is probably a piece of philosophy which has been added at a late date to the belief in soul. Generally the tribes base their belief in souls on the phenomena of dreams and visions. We must not hastily conclude that these were the original basis of the belief, for Indian religion is very far from primitive; but the adventure of the dream is to them so real that a servant will sulk all day in the belief that his master has, as he dreamed, taken him out during the night. The antics of the *peiaman* (or medicine man) are also interpreted to mean that his soul has left his body, and may have entered an animal.

From this basic belief the Amerind has developed a general animism. Not only animals and plants, but even what we call inanimate objects, have souls, and may be possessed by spirits. The soul of the animal is not essentially distinct from that of man, and the Indian is therefore richly supplied with legends about the conversation and cleverness of animals. As to the stones which he animates, he replies to the objector that they are no more inert than the human body is during sleep.

The spirit is not definitely conceived as immortal—we saw that few savage peoples think out this point—and Sir Everard observes that these Indian tribes have scarcely even reached the idea of a great spirit, a cult, or a happy life after death. They seem to represent an early and interesting stage of American religion. A man is buried in his hut, and it is then deserted so that the spirit may revisit it at

any time. The ghosts are vaguely imagined to hover among the living, and the more malignant of them, whom the *peiaman* must fight, cause disease. Yet the same Indians speak of a sky-land, from which their ancestors came, and to which the stronger soul of the *peiaman* goes after death. Since their ancestors came from the north (where, to a savage eye, the sky touches the earth), we are tempted to detect here one of the roots of the religious legend of a sky-land; but there is equal evidence that the upward flight of birds has partly suggested the idea. Probably in many parts of the earth both these suggestions of a sky-land have been at work.

Sir Everard tells us that they have not advanced to the conception of a great spirit or a cult, and that there is no hierarchy of the innumerable spirits. As we saw, however, travellers use relative language in this respect, and what a missionary may optimistically call a god another observer will contemptuously dismiss as a grandfather's ghost. It appears that the Indians attribute heavy rain or a flood to a spirit named Aenicidu, of which they give no further account. The Caribs, however, speak of "an ancient one in the sky." The Arawak have a being whom they call "our father" and "our maker." The Warrau respect "our maker." Other tribes have corresponding ideas. Sir Everard is confident that these are the ghosts of earlier ancestors; and this has been our general experience up to the present.

Yet it is plainly possible that when a tribe has got to the pitch of crediting inanimate objects with souls it may easily fabricate non-human spirits.

The Indian thinks the spirits in certain rocks beside his rivers so malignant that he must steal past them unobserved; which he does by rubbing red pepper into his eyes, so that he cannot see the rocks, childishly inferring that they will therefore not see him. The sun and the moon have spirits, and the eclipse means that they are fighting, so that the Indians try to separate them by yelling. Sir Everard believes that all these spirits are ghosts of the dead, whereas an adherent of the *mana* theory will probably hold that they are rather the crystallization of a once diffused spiritual force into personal agencies. This is probably the most interesting problem suggested to us by Amerind religion, and we will pursue the inquiry among other tribes before seeking a solution. I would add, however, that Sir Everard found, as we have in every people we have studied at this or a lower level, "absolutely no connection" between morals and religion in Guiana.<sup>1</sup>

The Amerinds of the north, whose religion is much more frequently quoted, are much higher in development. Mr. J. Teit (*The Thompson Indians of British Columbia*, 1900) describes a group of these tribes whose religion is relatively pure, and presents a phase beyond that we have just studied. Everything in nature that moves—that is to say, water, fire, and rocks, as well as animals and plants—has a soul, and all these souls pass to a land happier than, but generally resembling, this. Each soul,

<sup>1</sup> Page 342.

however, now has a shadow, and it is these dim, light-grey duplicates of the soul which remain on the earth to plague and afflict the living. They chase men, devour their food, and play hundreds of mischievous pranks. The soul proper, except the souls of the drowned, of suicides, and of Christians—an amusing reaction of the native shaman against the missionary—go to a land, beyond the sunset, which is under the earth. The path or trail to it is well known and minutely described. Three grey-headed old men guard it and turn back the humans whose time has not yet come. The others are conducted to a beautiful country, where food abounds and evil is unknown; and there they will remain until “the Old Man” or “the Coyote” returns to the earth.

The Old Man is their “relatively Supreme Being,” the “god” of those writers on religion who are determined to find a god everywhere. He lives on the mountains, and makes rain or snow by scratching his hind parts. The “Old Coyote” was sent by him to fashion the earth, and the elaborate mythology refers to several other naive superhuman beings. The sun and the moon were, according to some, once Indian chiefs; and the moon could be as bright as the sun if his sister (the Hare or the Frog) did not sit on him. The rainbow was once a man, and the stars are transfigured human beings. The winds are due to men in the north. The thunder is a bird. There are, in fact, spirits and myths for every element and aspect of nature. Even the healthful sweat-bath owes its virtue to a

spirit. The principle is a quite intelligible animism. If whatever virtue there is in a man is due to his "spirit," then everything in nature that has a special virtue, everything that does something, has a spirit. We should particularly notice that each of these spirits is definite and personal. The more or less impersonal power expressed in the language of some of the higher tribes of Indians is a later generalization.

From this belief we naturally get a cult. The Indians pray to their spirits for preservation. They venerate the peaks of mountains, and each morning one of the older men of a family goes out to salute the Dawn. It is believed, for some unknown reason, that the Dawn will cure hernia if entreated by an adolescent girl. They pray to the rain-spirit to put an end to excessive downpours, and to the wind-spirit to dry the land. Even the spirits of animals are respected. A man will not boast that he has shot a deer, lest the ghost of the deer hear him and be offended. They pray to "the Sunflower Root" before making a meal of that delicacy; and at the beginning of the tobacco season they salute the weed, addressing it as "chief," in a simple kind of semi-religious ceremony. Each man has, in addition, a guardian spirit, which he adopts during the puberty ceremonies. The warrior will have it embodied in a weapon; the shaman in a heavenly body or other important element; the common man in an animal or plant, or even a tobacco-pipe.

A tribe of North Dakota, which is closely related to the Sioux, is described by F. Will and H. J.

Spinden (*The Mandans*, 1906), and shows us a slightly higher development of the same animism. The guardian spirits of each individual are won by rigorous asceticism, and moral transgressions must be atoned, even by the sacrifice of sections of the fingers. Generalizing on the kind of virtue or power which the spirits may give to things, they call it "medicine," and conceive it much as the Melanesians conceive *mana*. A gun, a horse, or a pipe may be enriched by a certain ritual with "medicine." Some pipes are "medicine"-pipes, and some common wood. Each individual and each tribe has a bag ("medicine-bag") full of these precious objects—skulls, drums, pipes, etc.

The chief spirit, the "Lord of Life" and creator of the earth, lives in the sun, which, as his abode, is venerated. Next to him in importance is the first man, who was saved from a deluge; then there are a great evil spirit, a helpful and protective spirit who lives in Venus, a vague wandering being called "the Lying Prairie Wolf," and "the Old Woman who never dies." The last-named lives in the moon, and presides over the growth of the corn. Her six children are the day, the sun, the night, the morning star, the pumpkin, and the evening star. Then there is a large turtle which causes thunder; and the lightning is the flash of the eyes of a large bird which is making a path for the rain through the clouds. Images of the Lord of Life, the sun, and the moon are carved, and little shrines are used for housing them. A man has four souls, and at death one returns to the Lord of Life, while another

passes to the remote villages where ghosts tranquilly live a life similar to that of earth. In the Sioux and some of the other tribes the souls of the good and the evil are separated on the way to the ghost-land; and the wicked pass to a dreary, wintry land, instead of the happy hunting-ground.

We have next to see how this animistic religion of the Amerinds develops into the ritual and sacerdotal religion of Mexico and Peru, but it will be instructive to glance first at its relation to the lower types of religion we have studied. Some of the new theories of religion are based upon the conceptions of such tribes as the Mandans and the Sioux, and it is claimed that (as Dr. Keane says) Spencer's ghost theory is discredited by the Amerind evidence. The coincidence of their "medicine" or *manitou* (or other impersonal spiritual influence) with *mana* is emphasized, and it is often suggested that they point to an evolution or crystallization of personal spirits out of a diffused impersonal force. Certainly in their case the cult of ancestors is immensely overshadowed by a general animation of nature.

There is no intrinsic reason whatever why the development of religion should not have followed different lines in different regions of the earth, especially since such parts of the human family as the Amerinds have for ages been isolated from other groups. Yet I question if there has been any substantial difference. Dr. Keane, after observing that American religion discredits Spencer's theory, tells us that, as many think, the great god of the



Mexicans (Quetzalcoatl) and of the Mayans (Kukulcan) may have been a deified ancestor; and if the chief deities of these most advanced Amerinds bear that complexion (as we shall see), it is not difficult to suppose that the deities of the less advanced tribes may have passed through that development. The only way to test the point would be, not to regard in isolation the myths of the Sioux or the Algonquin, but to arrange the American peoples in a cultural series, from the Eskimo or the ruder Indians of the south to the Mexicans. That cannot be done here, but a brief examination of the types of American religion we have considered will enable us to judge the tendency of the evidence.

In following the description of the religion of the Eskimo and of the Guiana Indians the reader will have noticed that, while nature is crowded with definite personal spirits and the ghosts of the dead contribute incessantly to the crowd, there is almost no idea of an impersonal spiritual force. The Eskimo has formed the idea of a general "vital energy" (as we call it) that men share. The Guiana Indian puts a definite soul in each object that moves or grows. It is conceivable that a higher tribe may generalize on such notions and attain the idea of a diffused impersonal spiritual force. But there is no such generalization at the lower American level, and it seems incredible that anybody should regard the innumerable spirits in which both believe as evolved out of the impersonal. On the contrary, we have found this belief in concrete spirits from the very dawn of religion, and it continues throughout the



whole series. The impersonal comes late, and it seems to me to be not properly a religious conception. Man finds himself using a multitude of magical objects and phrases which have "virtue"; he finds himself surrounded by myriads of spirits which have "power"; he surveys a surrounding world which is full of "energy." These three generalizations, separately or jointly, will give him, at a certain level of mental development, the idea of *mana*, *tondi*, medicine, vital energy, and so on. But the concrete spirit or magical act precedes by ages, in every case, the generalization.

It seems to me that precisely the American evidence discredits the new view. Animism, or animationism, now fully develops. But instead of our finding the spiritual at the lower levels as a vague mist or fluid diffused through nature, condensing into definite spirits at the higher level, we have the reverse. The lower Amerinds put a definite spirit or ghost in each object that moves or grows. The higher Amerinds alone generalize and know the impersonal. The order of evolution is, surely, that man, capable at last of reflection, sees that his own movements are due to his spirit (since the spiritless or dead body is inert), and concludes that growth or movement everywhere is due to a spirit. At a very early level, we saw, he grants a soul to animals. At a later level he perceives—what is not quite so obvious—that trees live, and grants them spirits, or embodies spirits in them. Becoming still sharper of eye, he seems to detect life in inanimate objects, or concludes that the specially effective stone

or weapon has something not possessed by the common object. He grants it a soul. The prototype of all is his own ghost. In fine, he reaches the general idea of spirituality, power, or invisible energy.

It is, however, an entirely different question whether all his "great spirits" or gods were once the ghosts of dead men, and it seems, *à priori*, improbable that the rich mythopœic imagination of man at this level of development should be thus restricted. He is now accustomed to the idea that movement in nature is caused by spirits. When a new movement or aspect of nature dawns upon him he is quite capable of inventing a spirit to account for it. There is therefore no reason why we should strain evidence to prove that the numerous figures of American legend—the Great Father and the Old Woman, the Raven and the Coyote, etc.—are all the fantastic shades of ancestors. It does not even seem worth while to search laboriously if they are.

At the same time the bias of evidence is on the side of the ancestral school. The Amerinds, let us remember, are higher than any of the peoples we have yet considered. Their mythology and ethic alone would show this. Now we saw that at the lower level traces of ancestral human shape cling so commonly to the gods that there is quite a general tendency to regard them as ancestors. Those traces are, however, fading, and at a higher level we should be prepared to miss them. Such is the level of the Amerind; though even here ancestral traces cling to some of even the highest gods. Our African

experience leads us to expect that almost every part of nature was occupied by an ancestral spirit at quite an early stage. Then priests detach these spirits from a locality, transpose them, magnify them, make general deities of them. They cannot, as a rule, suppress them, to invent others. Tradition is very powerful among the lower peoples. It is much easier to convert Jahveh into a god than to supersede a tribal memory or fetish by a new spiritual creation. It seems therefore probable that, while developing man was quite capable of inventing gods, he found it expedient as a rule to use the glorified ancestral figures which were rooted in domestic and tribal life.

We may now study how, quite apart from the main Euro-Asiatic stream of religious development, this animistic creed of the Amerinds grows into an elaborate ritual and sacerdotal religion. The secret of progress in human development is racial contact, clash of cultures. In isolation we found our lowest religions; in central America, the region where the moving tribes meet and cross, we find the germination of civilization. It has long been known that in Mexico and Peru the Spaniards found native civilizations which, in spite of barbaric features that still clung to them, were of high promise and complex life. Socially, politically, commercially, and in point of art they were civilizations. It is now well known that between the two, earlier in development than both and not improbably the inspirer of both, was the civilization of the Mayans of central America.

Remnants of this Mayan civilization survive to-day in Mexico and Yucatan, and, although their religion is degenerate, it will be advisable first to glance at it.<sup>1</sup> They believe, in the customary American fashion, that at death the soul is conducted to a land similar to, but better than, the earth; though, like all peoples who profess that belief, they dread death and cling nervously to this vale of tears. From the elaborate religion of earlier times there still lingers among them a faint memory of thirty-six gods and goddesses, fifteen of whom they actively venerate. Most of them are regarded as benevolent—the Mayan religion was never so truculent as the Mexican—and are located in cliffs by the banks of rivers. At the head of the pantheon is the usual “Great Father,” who lives on earth, though the sun is his servant. He has three brothers, and from their attributes Dr. Tozzer concludes that the four brothers stand for the four cardinal points, with which they are closely connected. Next comes a mother-goddess, the parent of several minor deities; her relation to the four brothers is not defined. She presides over child-birth, and receives the usual offerings of flowers and incense at the birth of a child. Probably she is, or was, the general spirit of fertility. Her husband, a featureless semi-human being, comes next; and there are also a snake of many heads, and gods of fire, the forest, music, the bees, and so on. Thunder and lightning are lesser beings; and the sun and moon (conceived as man

<sup>1</sup> *A Comparative Study of the Mayas and the Lacandonas* (1907) by Dr. A. M. Tozzer.

and wife) also belong to the lower class. During an eclipse the sun is believed to be dangerously ill, and the Mayans are much concerned.

These beliefs are generally common to the Mayans and Lacandones, but the Mayans add other elements. They tell that three phases or periods preceded the present age of the world. In the first were "the adjusters" (or fashioners of the earth), who turned to stone when the sun rose. In the second were "the offenders," who perished in a flood. In the third the Mayans appeared. But we have to be on our guard here against Christian intrusions. The Mayan tradition is that there are seven heavens, and we learn that they now place in the seventh heaven the god of the Spaniards, while the old gods have retired, sinking to the rank of spirits, to the lower stories. The story of a deluge, which is common, may be aboriginal; and it is not impossible that it is based upon the period of flood which followed the last extension of the Ice Age. Underground the Mayans place a malevolent god of the underworld and the earthquake.

These, however, are but faded relics of the Mayan system which at one time dominated the central region of America. The four pale gods of to-day were then powerful deities with elaborate priest-hoods, temples, and ritual, who dominated the Mayan year. Although associated with the points of the compass, they had special and important functions in the life of man. The first was the god of fertility; the second was the sun-god; the third was the spirit of the moon and of fire; the fourth

was Lord of the Dead and the Six Under-Worlds. One was chosen to preside over each year. The last five days of the year were "nameless days"—a curious reminiscence of the Roman calendar—and the image of the god of the following year was then set up.

The Mayan priests, or "lords of days," as they were called, were expert astronomers and mathematicians. They were the educators of the people; and the high artistic skill which the race attained was employed in adorning the cult. Human sacrifice was rare, and even the function of sacrificing animals was not regarded as one of the more honourable of their functions. The chief tribute they paid to the gods was the burning of incense, and the elaborate use of this spice in the Catholic Church to-day is quite simple in comparison with the intricate and rich incense-ritual of the Mayans and Mexicans. As the progress of the sun was now carefully observed, a regular calendar of festivals succeeded the crude ritual by which more primitive man had marked the beginning and end of the food-season—the tribal grace before and after meals, so to say. In January the great feast of Ocna honoured the gods of labour and of rain. In March an immense number of animals were sacrificed in fire to the rain-god, and the priests came with jars of water to extinguish the embers and offer up the hearts of the victims. In April it was the turn of the black god of the merchants and the god of the bees. In July, when the year began, there was (as there is in China) a mighty secular and religious

cleansing; and the priests, who had purified themselves by a long fast of more than forty days, kindled new fire from the ancient fire-drill and blessed all weapons and implements—a most marked coincidence with the fire-making with which Catholic priests close their annual Lent. In September came the festival of the great Kukulcan (the Mexican Quetzalcoatl), the most popular of the gods.

We have, however, more information about the similar religion of the Mexicans, and to this we may turn. There are two popular impressions of the religion which the Spanish invaders and missionaries discovered in Mexico, and they are both correct, yet apparently not very consistent. On the one hand the native religion—with its elaborate ritual and priesthood, its incense and cross, its monks and nuns, its confession and communion, and so on—had so many points of contact with Roman Catholicism that the Spaniards imagined an early evangelization of America by the apostle Thomas. Even Humboldt was so impressed by the religion that he supposed there had been at some time a Buddhist mission from China. On the other hand, however, it is well known that the Mexican religion was appallingly stained by human sacrifices which belong to the barbaric stage in the development of religion.

Modern scholarship has by no means cleared all the obscurities in regard to this ancient civilization; but it is at least agreed that the Aztecs, who were chiefly responsible for the human sacrifices, were a vigorous race of a lower cultural level who had

recently grafted themselves upon an earlier civilization, and had, when the Spaniards arrived, not had time to eliminate entirely the barbaric traditions which they had brought with them. Before the tenth century the region which we call Mexico was ruled by a confederation of peoples—commonly, but not accurately, called the Toltecs—with a culture and religion akin to those of the Mayas. Upon these, it is believed, there fell first the Chichimec, and then, from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries, the Aztecs. We thus understand the survival, as in medieval Christianity, of features of barbaric conquerors; and we are prepared to find that the religion is, as everywhere else, a crude compromise between the gods and priests of the older and of the later peoples. It is so complex, and is known to us in such detail, that even a summary account of it would overrun my space; but a few characteristic points may be selected.<sup>1</sup>

The first characteristic was that, as in the whole area of American civilization, the sun was the chief object of religious attention. There was at one time a theory that the sun was the primary and central object of religious worship; and the student who approaches the subject by examining the early features of Mexican, Chinese, Egyptian, Babylonian, and even Greek religion, naturally entertains that suspicion. But we have seen that in the earlier phases of the development of religion the sun attracts

<sup>1</sup> See, especially, A. Réville's *Histoire des Religions*, vol. ii, and the same author's *Lectures on the Growth and Origin of Religion* (1884).



little or no attention. Its majesty and power are not perceived by primitive man, and when, as one of the conspicuous elements of nature, it begins to share the extending veneration it is merely made the abode of a human ghost and enjoys a secondary regard. Gradually, we saw, the sky attracts the imagination of man more and more, and is increasingly regarded as the home of the gods. It seems then to be discovered that the sun is the all-important element of the sky and the cause of its mysterious changes. The sun is increasingly associated with divine power, and at the threshold of civilization—as in Mexico and ancient China, in early Egypt and Babylonia—it becomes either the great god or an emblem or vehicle so closely associated with the chief god as to be, in practice, an object of worship.

The chief god of the Mexicans was Quetzalcoatl, though it appears that this was an earlier deity whom the Aztecs could not supplant. He was "The Feathered Snake," and in his idols was so represented; but the older Mexicans seem to have regarded him as the creator of men and the initiator of civilization. His worship had not the ghastly features of the Aztec cults. Indeed, it is known that before the rise to power of the Aztecs a king of very humane and beneficent disposition built, at Tezcucó, a vast temple in honour of Quetzalcoatl from which all blood was excluded. Only flowers and incense were offered in it. From the legends which were told of Quetzalcoatl some have concluded that he was a glorified ancestor, while others have inferred that he was a personification of the moon,

and others that he represented originally the soft and fertilizing east wind of the Mexican coast. The legends, however, have been so modified and complicated that it is now useless to seek to determine by positive evidence whether Quetzalcoatl began his divine career as an ancestor or a personified natural phenomenon.

The chief gods of the Aztecs were Uitzilopochtli and Tetzcatlipoca. The former was the war-god, the "terror" as he was at times called; and it was he who, carried in a box by the priests (just as Jahveh was carried into Palestine), had led the victorious Aztecs into Mexico. He was associated both with the sun and the humming-bird; but, as the beautiful little bird was itself called a "ray" or "hair" of the sun, we may see in this no discrepancy. The priestly legends told that he was born miraculously, without father, so that we now encounter that common religious legend for the first time. His mother, who became among the Mexicans the goddess of flowers (as Mary became in Catholicism the virtual goddess of the month of May), received him into the womb in the shape of a ball of feathers which fell from the sky. Her relatives were minded (as Joseph was) to prosecute her for faithlessness; but here the analogy ends, for when Uitzilopochtli reached man's estate he fell with bloody severity upon his relatives and became a truculent warrior. Réville and others see in this a mythical account of the earth conceiving in the spring-time from the embrace of the sun, but the cult of the god is not so simple as this suggests.

There were three great festivals in his honour—one at the commencement of the rains in the spring, one (in July) at the commencement of the beautiful season after the rains, and one about the time of the winter solstice. At the last of the three festivals an image of the god was made of paste and children's blood, and pierced at the heart with a lance, so that he figuratively died, and yielded place to the other god, until the spring. There is in this a very clear allusion to the annual death and re-birth of the sun and the vegetation; and we may conclude that, since an early chief of the Aztecs of the same name is recorded, we have here a blend of a glorified ancestor and a nature-myth.

Tetzcatlipoca seems to be the winter sun-god. In the monstrous and precious idols at the summits of the pyramid-temples he had the head of a tapir, but in his hand was a mirror which gave him his name, "The Shining Mirror." Some regarded him as a personification of the moon, though in the cult he seems rather to be the winter-sun. Possibly the two have been merged into one, and he and his counterpart may have been originally the sun and the moon. The religion is full of traces of the way in which rival priesthoods have compounded cults and adjusted the legends of rival gods. However that may be, his character as a "mirror" (the disk of either the moon or the sun) easily transformed him, when the Aztecs adopted moral culture, into an "all-seeing eye" and a rival of the older native god Quetzalcoatl. He became the moral governor of the universe and the punisher of sin. The

Spanish priests were, in fact, astounded and embarrassed to find that the priests of Tetzcatlipoca heard the confessions of the Mexicans, and granted absolution from sin, just as they themselves proposed to do.

Tlaloc, the "Nourisher," the god of rain and water, of thunder and lightning, was the third great god. In the statues he had but one eye, which seems to identify him with the sky; but he was peculiarly associated with whirlpools, into which the hearts of human victims were cast. At the great festival in his honour, at the beginning of the year, a number of beautifully dressed children were sacrificed, and it was held that if they wept the rains of the year would be abundant. Tlaloc sent rheumatoid diseases—just as Quetzalcoatl, the parching winter-sun, sent famine—and to those who suffered severely from them the priest of Tlaloc took a paste image of the god (as a priest takes a consecrated wafer to the sick Catholic) and offered it to eat. His wife was "Our Lady" Chalchibit, and the cross was his symbol. The cross was, however, square, and is believed to have represented the four quarters of the compass, or the four winds that might bring rain from them. He had more festivals than any other god, and in his case also we find an example of the way in which the people were outgrowing the barbarities of their religion. At one festival dolls were much used, and it seems clear that, as in ancient Rome or modern China, these were substitutes for living children whom it had once been the custom to offer him.

The many other gods and goddesses may be dismissed shortly. There was a goddess of love, "Our Lady of Impurities," who had no temple or cult, but she had a body of priests who heard confessions. One of the legends about her tells how she tempted a holy man who had withdrawn into the desert to commune with the gods. Then there were gods of the maize, of fire, of voyages, of joy, of healing, of agriculture. Besides these there were, as in Rome, little gods or guardian spirits of the domestic hearth, which tell of the earlier ancestor-worship upon which the comprehensive nature-cult seems to have been imposed.

The human sacrifices which at times drenched the temples with blood may lead some to expect that the priests were little better than savages; but one must remember the casuistic nature of the priestly mind. When Cortes expressed his abhorrence of the sacrifices, they pointed out that they had the right, as the Spaniards had, to kill men in war, and so might offer prisoners of war (as the victims generally were) to their gods. Had they foreseen the future conduct of Cortes and his Christian countrymen, or known the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition, their argument might have been strengthened. We must remember, however, that they were men not long emerged from barbarism, and we have seen proofs that their cult was evolving in a humane direction. It may at least be said for them that they were as stern to themselves as in the practice of their cult. They were rich and powerful, but sombre and ascetic. From their

seventh year they had been trained as priests and teachers, and, once they were anointed (with the blood of infants), they formed a caste apart, wearing long hair and long black mantles and living in the temple-colleges. They officiated at births, marriages, and funerals, and walked in the great processions. They practised very long fasts, and rose in the night to chant hymns.

It completes the strange analogy with Roman Catholicism when we learn that there were also hermits and monks. Many of the priests practised austerities which rival the most painful performances of our medieval saints; many retired into the deserts to lead a solitary life. There were also large monasteries or convents, in which men or women vowed themselves to lives of chastity and discipline. All the girls of the wealthy were trained in the nunneries—as boys were educated by the priests—and made so stern a vow of chastity that they were put to death if they violated it. Like Catholic nuns, they made the sacred cakes and garments for temple use, tended the incense which burned at the altars, and rose during the night. Most of them left at the age of fifteen to marry, but a few remained, as nuns, for life.

The very complex mythology and ritual of this remarkable religion cannot be described here, and I will close with an account of the Mexican belief in the life after death. It is a very common experience that as man rises above the primitive level this belief becomes again vague and shadowy. So we find among the Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans,

as opposed to the Egyptians or the Persians. Among the Mexicans the ordinary soul passed at death to the underworld, and had to confront the god Mictlan. But there was no judgment, and it seems to have been the belief that the soul then wandered for a time in a dim and fantastic underworld until it eventually faded out of existence. On the other hand, the souls of kings, nobles, soldiers who fell in the field, and women who died in child-birth passed to a sort of "heaven" in the house of the sun; while children who had been drowned or sacrificed went to Tlaloc's garden on the mountains to receive their reward.

When we pass from Mexico to Peru we encounter a culture and religion which had peacefully developed for six centuries when the Spaniards arrived, and had therefore almost entirely shed the clinging relics of early barbarism. Human sacrifice was almost, though not wholly, unknown; there was an ancient deity whose priests sombrely insisted on an occasional human victim. At the spring festival the sacramental cakes were still made of maize-meal and children's blood, but the priests had now to be content with bleeding, instead of slaying, the infants. The offerings to the gods were usually flowers, incense, and food; though animal sacrifices were frequent. Widows were no longer buried with their husbands; and, as in China, the images of men and women which were sent to accompany the soul of the dead illustrated a humane development since the days when slaves or wives had been buried alive.



The sun was, in the kingdom of the Incas, even a more prominent deity than in Mexico. One third of the entire territory belonged to the sun (or his priests), one to the ruling Inca (the Son of the Sun), and one to the people; and it was as chief priest and descendant of the sun-god that the Inca exerted that minute and beneficent control of all his subjects which made Peru a unique and highly civilized polity. The sun and the moon were both brother and sister, and husband and wife; and the legend ran that the Peruvians had lived in a state of savagery until these heavenly deities took pity on them and sent two of their children to educate them. We are beginning to encounter this myth of a heaven-sent saviour-god on all sides. The divine children were brother and sister, and they became the parents of the long line of the Incas. Hence it was that the Incas shared the divinity of the sun, and were free to marry their sisters. It is piquant to learn from the early Spanish writers that the Incas had developed a little private scepticism in regard to this profitable legend.

The golden disk of the sun-god and the silver disk of the moon-god were the two conspicuous objects of the superb temples. Gold was not unnaturally related to the fiery sun of Peru, and was scattered profusely about the temples and palaces. Other deities—of water, rain, the rainbow, the earth, etc.—were recognized, but they seem to have been the older deities which some conquering tribe had to be content to reduce to secondary rank. Among the mass of the people there lingered also



a great deal of regard for lesser spirits ; and every part of nature, even every garden, and sometimes a stone, had its indwelling spirit. This world of spirits may originally have been the ghosts of the dead, but in the time of the Spanish invasion that phase had passed. The souls of the common people passed to a misty underworld and were forgotten ; the souls of the Incas and nobles ascended to the sun.

There was only, Professor Réville says, "a very elementary moral significance" in the Peruvian religion. There was, as in Mexico, a practice of auricular confession ; but, though the people confessed to the priests, the institution was really in the interest of the State or the Incas. It was more properly an Inquisition. But the rule of the Incas was humane and philanthropic, and the little stress, from the side of the cult, on morals does not mean a lack of moral ideals, any more than in China or Japan, or in ancient Greece and Rome. There were, as in Mexico, strictly isolated convents of women—"Virgins of the Sun," who made the priestly garments and sacramental food and tended the altars. They were generally daughters of nobles, though a very beautiful girl of the common people might gain admittance ; a piece of liberality which may not be unconnected with the fact that among them the Inca found recruits for his harem. They "belonged to the Sun," as Catholic nuns "belong to the Lord," and the Sun's earthly representative might presume permission to use them. Otherwise these Vestal Virgins—they tended the sacred fire—

or Spouses of the Lord, seem to have been more faithful to their vows than the nuns of the Middle Ages were. There were five hundred of them in one large convent.

It would require a volume to attempt to trace the development of each feature of these Mexican and Peruvian religions from the earlier level. Fascinating as that task would be, it cannot be attempted here even in the most summary fashion. The reader will, however, have seen how in the general features of these cults we have a steady and intelligible evolution. The ghost element, the primitive level of religion, is now left far behind, or lingers only in faint and disappearing traces. The next level, the placing of spirits in natural elements or phenomena, survives very plainly in Peru and among the Mayas. But the third great level, the personification of the larger powers of nature, especially the heavenly bodies, is now attained, and its development overshadows all else. Myths and legends preserve in naive fashion the conflicts of the new cults with the gods and priesthoods of the older spirit cults, and the compound legends of the later age are apt to refer to large families or hierarchies of gods. Morality, also, is now for the first time definitely associated with religion. The priests become teachers and moralists, and their god is represented as the inspirer and vindicator of the moral code. Such, we shall find as we proceed, is the normal development of religion from savagery to early civilization.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RELIGIONS OF ASIA

THE principle which the inquirer must hold steadily in mind in studying the evolution of religion, or any human development, is that isolation means stagnation; that progress depends upon the clash of cultures. Twenty years' study of history and anthropology have convinced me that this is the supreme generalization in relation to human progress. It is, indeed, a law that goes back deep into the biological world, but its action is intensified when the mental organism of man is superadded to the animal organism. We have already verified this. Our lowest peoples—that is to say, our least progressive peoples—were found in islands and central forests, or at the tips of continents. Our secondary peoples were second also in respect of isolation. The historical peoples whom we now study are, on the contrary, always found in regions where some particularly fertile area and central (or easily accessible) position have led to a great mingling of tribes and clash of religious cultures. That was the secret of the civilizations of central America. It is the secret of the civilizations of Asia.

Since our interest in religion is strictly evolutionary, we will, as in the last chapter, first examine some of

the cruder religions which still survive beyond the frontiers of Chinese civilization, and we shall then be better able to trace the development of Chinese religion in its earliest known form. In the second part of the chapter we will attempt to do the same for the religions of India. In the first chapter I spoke of the historic religions as condensations of nebular religious material, some of which is still found, as streamers of nebular material are found in clusters of finished stars, among less advanced peoples. It is on this account that I choose the method of first examining the nebular religion of primitive Asiatic peoples, and then the historic religions which have somehow developed from them.

Apart from the Negritoes and the Melanesians of the islands, whom we have studied, there are two groups of peoples on the continent of Asia who claim attention—those which were embraced under the now somewhat antiquated name of Mongols, and the Dravidian peoples of the south. We may here ignore hybrid peoples and invaders, and take the former as representing earlier stages of Chinese civilization and the latter in connection with Indian religion. The Mongols in turn are divided into two families, and we will be content to glance at a few of the northern, or Ural-Altaic, peoples who still, in some measure, maintain in northern Siberia the kind of life which may have preceded the ancient civilization of China. Such are the Koryak, the Chukchee, and the Yukaghir, who drag out a miserable existence on the fringe of the Arctic Ocean.

Mr. W. Bogoras has given us a minute and interesting account of the religion of one of these peoples (*The Chukchee*), and it will serve as fairly typical for the group. Animism is so outstanding a characteristic that Mr. Bogoras is tempted to preface his account with a theory of the development of religion on animistic lines. To the Chukchee everything that moves has a soul or spirit; even large stones which remain motionless in the frozen waste are said to be earlier men who have been turned into stone. The attitude is, in fact, much the same as that of the Eskimo and the Amerinds, as we should expect, since these are believed to have come into America from north-eastern Asia. Every tree has its "master" (as they say) or animating spirit. Every forest, river, or lake has a "master"; and these are so humanly conceived that the spirits of the forests are credited with a fondness for brandy and for playing cards. The spirit of a river has a thick white skin and a long-haired wife. The spirit of a lake has an especial dislike of the dipping into the water of iron tools. Every animal has a spirit so like that of man that it may during life assume human form, and at death it passes to a spirit-land of animals. This, we saw, is a common interpretation of nature once man has realized that his own energy and movement are due to a spirit or detachable double of the body.

The next phase, the belief in disembodied spirits, yields the familiar crowd of prowling demons who make the sufficiently miserable life of the Chukchee still more hideous. They haunt the deserts and

lurk about the settlements. They chop up souls and feed their ghostly children on them. They love the heart or liver of men, and even specialize in producing disease. There is a spirit of syphilis, of colic, of rheum, and so on. Death is always due to their machinations. We are therefore not surprised to find among these peoples a great growth of shamans or devil-fighters; though the Chukchee believes he can exorcise the evil spirit himself by emptying a vessel of wine upon its head. Generally he has recourse to the magical practices of the rudimentary priest or shaman.

There is a corresponding world of friendly spirits, to whom sacrifices are offered; and, as in north America, ■ few of these have risen to a semi-divine rank. The sun and moon are both alive, and each star or constellation is animated by a spirit; and there is another link with America in the way in which the points of the compass enter the mythology. The Dawn and the Midday are personified, and we encounter again "The Raven" of the Amerinds and "the old woman at the bottom of the sea" of the Eskimo. The Chukchee, in fact, people the world with imaginary beings, and they draw the most fantastic designs of spirit-forms. Ancestor-worship lingers in the belief in domestic spirits. At the head of the whole crude hierarchy there is a "Creator" or "Life-giving Being," who presides over ■ vague sky-land, and is often identified with the Dawn or the Day. Like so many lowly peoples, they merely take him as an existing fact (as if he were the sky), and do not pray or sacrifice to him.

It is the nearer and more personal spirits that matter. There is also an underworld of great extent and very earthy nature to which the soul of the dead usually passes, and in which its ultimate fate is obscure; though some souls are thought to ascend in the smoke of the funeral pyre to the upper world. The idea of "heaven" is struggling for birth.

To the west of the Chukchee are the Yukaghir, who hold a similar religion (*The Yukaghir*, by W. Jochelson, 1910), and in the north of Kamchadal are the Koryak, who have been studied by the same writer (*The Mythology of the Koryak*, 1904). Here we have the usual crowd of malevolent spirits (and the usual crowd of shamans to do battle with them), with a morbid fancy for a man's heart or liver or soul. Each man and each house has a guardian spirit—a sufficiently clear link with the cult of ancestors; and with the domestic spirits are connected, in a semi-sacred sense, the fire-drill and the drum. All objects are animated, and Mr. Jochelson suggests that this explains the magical property of charms and talismans; though the belief is much older than animism. The shamans communicate with the spirits, and we find them developing the same trickery in the Arctic wastes as in tropical Africa. They produce the voices of spirits by ventriloquism, and their reward is great.

The mythology concerning the outstanding spirits, or evolving deities, resembles that of the north Americans. The Raven is credited with many heroic feats, and there are elaborate legends about

the first man, the ancestor and culture-giver of the Koryak, who is said by some to have been self-created and to be an assistant of the customary "Supreme Being." He seems to be an ancestor, or vague collection of ancestors rolled into one, in process of deification. The chief spirit, who is dignified by travellers and religious writers with the title of God and Supreme Being, is a rather indolent savage superman who lives with his family in sky-land. If men neglect sacrifice (of animals), he goes to sleep, and the course of nature is arrested or perverted. His son, "The Cloud Man," shares his modest divinity, and looks very like a mythical representation of the birth of clouds in the sky. There are, as among the other Ural-Altaians, the beginnings of a sacred calendar, in the familiar shape of grace before or after the harvest. The Koryak of the coast hold their festival, with dance and sacrifice, at the beginning and end of the sea-harvest; the Koryak of the interior in the spring and autumn, when the reindeer season opens and closes. The festival is domestic, and the eldest member of the family officiates.

Some of the Ural-Altaians, or ancient Mongols, have further refined the idea of a ruling spirit in sky-land, so that it would be difficult to draw a line between their belief and monotheism. Others, like the Buryats, have nothing that could be called a Supreme Being. They worship "heaven," and speak of "the will of heaven"; but of their ninety-nine heaven-dwelling spirits none is a distinct ruler. The most popular of them, Esseghe-Malan, the



Thunder-Bearer, is said in some legends to have once been a man. With him are a great company of spirits—the spirits of fire, lightning, hail, storms, winds, rain, and so on. The sun and moon are not outstanding figures, while the earth is now worshipped as well as heaven. The shaman is industrious and tricky, though among this people his qualifications are higher. Most of the Buryats, however, have embraced Lamaist Buddhism, and I ignore elements of their mythology which may come from that source.

The Ainu seem to belong to a different and obscure family, but we may glance at their religion (*The Ainu and their Folklore*, by J. Batchelor, 1901), as they are undoubtedly a fragment of a very early Asiatic race. They believe, as do the tribes we have just examined, that all moving or growing objects have souls; that, in effect, energy is life, and that in all its manifestations it continues to exist. After death souls descend underground—which their word for “die” literally means—but for a time the soul lingers about the grave, not being yet quite detached, and is not regarded as friendly. They wash a man, and beat his garments, if he has been near a grave. Food and wine are offered to the ghosts of ancestors. There is a strong conviction that the ghosts of the dead can return from the shadowy duplicate of earth in which they live, and hurt or help the living, so that the cult of ancestors is keen and active. With the dead they bury weapons and other objects, which they break; for each of these objects has a soul, and by breaking it they kill the body of the bow or the

oar and set free its soul for the use of the soul of the dead man.

Of the underworld of the dead itself they have an advanced mythology. There are dog-guides, and at one place a dog challenges the soul and accuses it of its evil deeds. If it denies them, the goddess of fire is summoned and the soul is convicted. The wicked soul then goes to a kind of hell; though some represent this as a cold and dreary region, and some as a place of fire. The alternative development is quite intelligible, as the extreme of either winter or summer is easily conceived to be a torture. The good pass to the "place of God," a world akin in its nature to this, but free from trouble. The Ainu have imagined that from the underworld the dead see what passes in this, and hence it is that the cult of ancestors survives, whereas it generally falls into decay as religion advances. One may justly suspect that here Buddhist ideas have been grafted upon the old religion.

The same suspicion arises when we consider their higher spirits. At the head is what Mr. Batchelor describes as the all-powerful creator, but the details he gives warn us to take those attributes with the usual liberality. In the beginning was a quagmire, and God sent a water-wagtail (a supernatural being like the Amerind Raven or Humming Bird) to dry and arrange it. We are acutely reminded of *Genesis* when we read that the wagtail "fluttered over the water" and beat the clay into shape. Deer were made from hairs, fish from scales, and so on. The wagtail then remained to initiate men into the

ways of civilization. Here, however, the functions seem a little mixed, as there is also a deity Aioina, who was sent to make and teach men, and who (like so many deities at this level) lived long among men in human shape. The Ainu trace their origin to Aioina, Mr. Batchelor says, "not in every case by way of natural generation, but by way of being created by him" (p. 2). He looks like a deified ancestor for whom a place has been found among adopted gods. Both deities are rivalled in popularity by the sun-goddess (or god, according to others) and moon-god (or goddess), though the luminaries are rather vehicles of deities than deities themselves. The sun-goddess is "the divine grandmother" and "divine angel," and—probably from Buddhist influence—she keeps a strict record of the evil deeds of men. In an eclipse the sun is fainting, or losing its spirit, and the Ainu sprinkle water towards it to revive it. Below these are the usual gods, or great spirits, of fire, water, the cloudy mountain tops, vegetation, the air, the stars, and so on; and legions of demons and common spirits infest the world and make trouble.

These are what I have called the patches of nebulosity—if one may apply the word to relatively advanced religions—which linger in the neighbourhood of China, and it would be natural to look for a development of the historic religion of China from this early material. Unfortunately, not only is the religion of China to-day an exceedingly complex blend of entirely different religions, but we know that a foreign intrusion must be recognized at the

very base of Chinese civilization. We have strong reason at least to suspect that a few thousand years before Christ a powerful and relatively civilized people came from the far west and imposed their culture upon the primitive inhabitants of the region. It has long been recognized that the Akkadians, who laid the foundations of the Babylonian civilization, were akin to the Chinese, and it is now generally believed that a branch of this race, or a people related to the Akkadians, crossed Asia, and began the story of civilization in China. This will reconcile the reader to the generalization with which I opened this chapter, in virtue of which one would hardly expect to find civilization developed in so isolated a region; but it does not encourage the hope of tracing the consistent development of religion in China. The story is, however, as far as we know it, interesting.

In a work entitled *The Original Religion of China* (1909) the Rev. Dr. J. Ross attempts to supply that knowledge of the earliest Chinese religion which we seek. His conclusions seem at first to be entirely at variance with the conclusions which the preceding chapters have recommended to us. He says that the ghost theory of religion—the theory that a cult of spiritual beings was evolved from a belief in surviving shades of dead men—“would never have been broached” if early Chinese religion had been taken into account. It is from the start, he says, ■ monotheism. It is ■ cult of Shangti (“The Ruler Above”) or Tien (“Heaven”), the creator and moral ruler of the universe. Whatever other great spirits

were recognized were simply servants of God, or intermediaries between man and him, and ought to be put on the level of Roman Catholic saints.

It would be a very singular thing, and the precise reverse of all that we have hitherto seen, if a religion had begun as monotheism and ended in the intense cult of ancestors which we find in China to-day; but we are accustomed to this paradoxical language of missionaries. They strain after monotheism in primitive religions, and they rarely have that acquaintance with other religions and with ethnology which is required for judging such a point. In his *Manual of the Science of Religion* (1891) Professor Chantepie de la Saussaye, a high authority, says of the minor deities of the early Chinese religion: "The opinion which represents them as servants of heaven, or as mediators between man and Shangti and subordinated to him, cannot be properly supported by texts" (p. 347). If the reader cares to study the many interesting texts adduced by Dr. Ross, he will conclude that the contradiction may be reconciled by the simple and just device of choosing an intermediate opinion. Shangti certainly rises high above the crowd of other great spirits, but if they are not deities then most of the lower peoples of the earth have no deities.

The main fallacy of Dr. Ross's argument is that he supposes the historical documents to contain a record of the "*original* religion of China." On similar reasoning, a Chinaman might look to the Pentateuch for a correct account of Jewish religion

in the days of Moses, and we know well to-day what an anachronism this would be. The date of the earliest Chinese writings is unknown, but even if we accept, as we may, their assurance that King Shun "offered the customary sacrifice to God" about the year 2255 B.C., we are little nearer the original Chinese religion than we are to-day. Even if we admitted that in the third millennium before Christ the religion was monotheistic, we should still have to regard this as the issue of a development that had occupied tens of thousands of years.

In point of fact, what is called the monotheism of early China is just such an advance upon Amerind religion as we should expect in the circumstances. In Mexico we found a definite polytheism, because three different peoples and their gods and priesthoods had mingled at a comparatively recent date when the Spaniards arrived. In Peru, where there had been no conquering invader (with new gods) for many centuries, the Sun-god had risen so high above all others that the religion was half-way towards monotheism. In China the Sky-God had advanced even further; and the fact that his cult was a State affair does much to explain its predominant position.

The evidence quoted by Dr. Ross shows that, in the third millennium before Christ, Chinese official religion—and official historians would pay scanty attention to popular cults—was a cult of Shangti or "Heaven." There were no temples of the cult, apparently; no priests apart from the State officials; and no prayers for forgiveness of sin. Altars might

be erected in any place, and on these the officials offered sacrifices for favours received. There was a high moral idealism, and Shangti, the creator and moral legislator, resented transgressions; but the punishment came in the form of earthly stripes such as disease or famine. It was not until about 1122 B.C. that another king enforced the cult of the earth, and the Chinese began to regard Heaven and Earth as the two august realities, the father and mother of all things. I may add that the earliest Chinese pictogram for God represents him as a man.

So far we have familiar religious elements. The primitive northern Mongols whom we have just examined looked to sky-land as the home of the deity, and ascribed to him, in a rudimentary way, the character of "Ruler above." And we still find no unfamiliar element when we consider the remainder of the religion, except that there seems to have been for a long time no female deity; which may very well be due to the masculine despotism of the Chinese. There were just the same great spirits in the various elements of nature as in other places, and the same sacrifices were offered to these as to Shangti. At the most, they were, perhaps, a little more subordinated (in legend) to the Sky-god than we find in less developed religions. "Worship of the subordinate deity was," says Dr. Ross (p. 144), "not considered inconsistent with the worship of the supreme." The condition was, in fact, henotheism, or the predominance of one among a small crowd of gods. Below these secondary deities—of



the air, clouds, thunder, rain, and wind—were innumerable guardian spirits of roads and villages and provinces, rivers and mountains and the fields. At the base was a lively cult of ancestors, representing the primitive form of religion. It is significant that the only temples in this early China were “dedicated to the worship of ancestors” (p. 38), Dr. Ross tells us.

This is, as I said, an entirely intelligible and orderly development of such religion as we found among the more primitive Mongols, and it may be that the coming of a superior race from the west and founding of a highly bureaucratic civilization had hastened the monotheistic development. But in the millennium before Christ Chinese civilization passed into a period of decay and disorder. For several centuries the State was rent and demoralized, and the old religion was modified. Sir R. K. Douglas (*Confucianism and Taouism*, 1906) agrees with Dr. Ross as to the earlier monotheism, and seems to complain that Shangti was in the later period identified with the physical heavens and robbed of his personality. This complaint is, however, purely relative. Sir R. K. Douglas and every other authority make it clear that in the period of disorder there was a considerable growth of intellectual life and sceptical discussion. The transformation of Shangti was deliberate. Scholars were reaching the inevitable stage of Atheism or Agnosticism, which comes at the culmination of every civilization; and, as scholars generally do, instead of frankly denying the existence of Shangti,



and thus coming into conflict with the State or the masses, they reduced him to a metaphor.

We have, in fact, here a religious development which few writers treat candidly. We have the development and diffusion of Agnosticism 2,500 years ago, and the spectacle of the educated class of a great civilization living from that day to this without religion. Such a condition is not congenial to writers who plead that man cannot live long without religion, and that Agnosticism is a fad of our time which is rebuked by the whole experience of the race. They therefore consistently speak of Taoism and Confucianism as "religions." The fact is that educated China reached the last term of religious evolution two thousand years ago, and has ever since been secularistic.<sup>1</sup>

In the sixth century before Christ two sages, Lao-tse and Kung-tse or Kung-fu-tse (Confucius), endeavoured to remedy the disorder of their country. I need not speak at any length of either their lives or their teaching, but it is necessary to emphasize the fact that both of them put upon a purely secular or humanitarian basis the new moral idealism they advocated. For Lao-tse we may accept the assurance of so high an authority as Sir R. K. Douglas in the above work (which was published by the S.P.C.K.): "Of a personal God Lao-tse knew nothing, as far as we may judge from the

<sup>1</sup> For convenient reference see, in addition to the work of Sir R. K. Douglas, the articles on "Confucius" and "Lao-tse" in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the *Dictionary of Ethics and Religion*, and Mr. E. H. Parker's *Studies in Chinese Religion* (1910).

*Taou-tih King*; and indeed a belief in such a being would be in opposition to the whole tenour of his philosophy" (p. 211). Dr. Legge quotes a passage in which the sage says of Tao ("the way"—that is to say, the way of life he advocated) that "it might appear to have been before God." But as this is the only reference to God in his work, and his teaching is otherwise consistently humanitarian, Sir R. K. Douglas sees in it only a concession to popular language. It is the same with the many vague references to "the will of heaven." Lao-tse's teaching is summed in a passage which Dr. Legge quotes:—

It is the way of Tao not to act from any personal motive, to conduct affairs without feeling the trouble of them, to taste without being aware of the flavour, to accept the great as small and the small as great, to recompense injury with kindness.

Lao-tse was, in fact, an unconscious utilitarian. Men were to act morally without motive; but he went on to say that when rulers were just and kindly, and subjects were virtuous, the world would be perfectly happy. It was the gospel of J. S. Mill expressed in somewhat mystic terms. On that gospel, two thousand years ago, Lao-tse attacked war and capital punishment and every form of injustice.

While the Rev. Dr. Legge, who writes admirably on both sages in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, makes a reserve in regard to Lao-tse, he frankly describes the teaching of Kung-fu-tse as "hardly more than a pure secularism." The word "hardly"

might with justice have been changed into "no." Kung-fu-tse referred at times to "the will of heaven," but it is admitted by all who are familiar with the Confucian literature (written by his followers) that he studiously evaded questions about religion, and that (as Dr. Legge says) "his teachings were singularly devoid of reference to anything but what was seen and temporal." The word "singularly" betrays again that Dr. Legge has no inclination to strain Kung-fu-tse's scepticism. It is accepted by all that, on the one occasion when Kung-fu-tse was cornered by an important personage and forced to express an opinion on the inspiration of life, he said: "To give oneself earnestly to the duties due to men, and, while respecting spiritual beings, to keep aloof from them—that may be called wisdom." That was a distinct repudiation of the cult of Shangti or any other spirit. Kung-fu-tse was a pure humanitarian.

In the *Dictionary of Ethics and Religion* Mr. W. G. Walshe (article "China") attempts to dilute or obscure the significance of this early scepticism. He weakly concedes that Kung-fu-tse "seems to have deprecated prayer" and "always refused to talk about supernatural phenomena." But he protests that the sage was merely "not a propagandist" of religion, that in the distressed circumstances of his country he would avoid controversy, and that at all events he got the material of his teaching from the existing religion. One would imagine, from modern religious literature, that the trouble of the time would have been a

cogent reason for *stressing*, not for avoiding, the practice of religion. But we need not pursue the subject. Kung-fu-tse was an Agnostic moralist whose few references to "the will of heaven" must be understood as we understand the sacrifices to "heaven" of a modern Agnostic Chinese official.

Confucianism is therefore not a religion. It is from sheer unwillingness to grant that at least the educated part of a great civilization has had no religion for two thousand years that Confucianism is constantly described as a religion. There is not one of Professor Leuba's fifty definitions of religion which covers it. It is an admirable and strictly utilitarian ethic. By a curious coincidence, indeed, Kung-fu-tse gave as the supreme rule of life the maxim which Christ would give five centuries later. It is sometimes inaccurately said that the Chinese moralist expressed the Golden Rule merely in the negative form. Dr. Legge tells us that, on the contrary, he "understood it in its most positive and comprehensive form." It is, in fact, contained in a single positive Chinese character which means literally: "As heart." The obvious import of it is: "Let your heart feel as your fellow's heart feels." And Kung-fu-tse has had this supreme reward among the earth's reformers, that he has never been deified; no priesthood has ever perverted his teaching. There is a beautiful temple beside his tomb, but the highest title they have dared to inscribe on it is: "The Most Holy Prescient Sage Kung-fu-tse." For two thousand years he has kept the

character of educated China, and later of Japan, at a high level without religion.

Lao-tse, his contemporary, from whose shade of mysticism he politely dissented, suffered the fate of reformers. His teaching of the Tao (or Way) became the fantastic religion of Taoism, and he himself was made one of its "Three Holy Ones." This was due chiefly to a genial alliance with the ritualistic Buddhism which was introduced into China in the first century, and we shall see presently how the pure teaching of Buddha suffered that fate. The Taoism of modern China is a hybrid product in which the Agnostic morality of the Tao disappears under a mass of superstitions about ancestors, devils, nature-spirits, heaven and hell, and magic.

Of Japan it is hardly necessary to treat separately, since the religious culture is analogous to that of China, and has been borrowed mainly from China. Confucianism is the culture of the educated and the basis of the whole high moral idealism of the Japanese schools. For the people there are ritualistic Buddhism, which we will consider later, and Shinto, which corresponds to the early Chinese religion. The chief element is the cult of ancestors—of the family spirits in the home and the ancestors of the dynasty in the temple. Professor Hozumi, indeed, curtly says: "The worship of the Imperial Ancestors is the national worship." The very number of the Shinto gods—popularly said to be eight millions—tells that they are essentially the ghosts of the dead. Nature-spirits, a goddess of mercy, and a god of healing find a place; and at the head of the

pantheon (if any may be said to be higher than the First Imperial Ancestor) is a sun-goddess, whose symbol, the mirror (as in Peru), is the most conspicuous object of the Shinto temple. In the sixth century Buddhism was introduced from China, and is equally popular with Shinto. The educated Japanese are generally Agnostic and Confucian, and the basis of their moral idealism is a compilation, called Bushido, of non-religious sentiments from any source known to them.

In the south of Asia, as I said, we have representatives of every level of human culture, or living relics of every phase of human development. From the wild Veddah of Ceylon to the cultivated Hindu of to-day we have the entire scale of evolution; and there are multitudes of peoples illustrating the intermediate stages. It would seem that this region of the earth alone would furnish sufficient material to enable us to trace the advance of religion from level to level. But it would take several volumes to arrange all the peoples of southern Asia in a hierarchy of culture and minutely trace the growth of religion from the Veddah or Andaman or Semang level to the mysticism of Tagore. Indeed, even the design of giving a slight sketch of such development does not properly fall within my plan, for of the three great religions of southern Asia—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Mohammedanism—the second is, like Confucianism, rather an abandonment than a development of religion, and the first and third are importations, not native growths. I will therefore be content to glance at the religion of one or two

peoples who fairly represent a religious level older than that which the Aryans imposed upon India, then at the religion of this invading people, and lastly at later religious developments in India.

The peoples of India who, apart from Mongol and other invaders, represent the general population before the arrival of the Aryans are now known as "Dravidian." We have studied a "Pre-Dravidian" level in the Veddahs, and in doing so we had glimpses of the religion of the Tamils, a Dravidian people of Ceylon and Madras. The Todas of the Nilgiri hills are another and particularly interesting Dravidian people, and Mr. W. H. R. Rivers (*The Todas*, 1906) has given us a very full and careful account of them. They are not of pure race, and, while they retain such primitive features as polyandry (a wife belonging also to her husband's brothers), their religion is actually in a state of decay. The forms and ritual it once engendered are stifling its spirit. But the old beliefs survive sufficiently to give us a glimpse of early religion in this part of the world.

The Todas are so industrious a pastoral people, and attach so much importance to the source of their maintenance, that many have regarded the buffalo as their god and the dairy as their temple. Mr. Rivers denies this, but admits that, while the gods are in decay, a sort of sacredness has been transferred to the buffalo and its bell. They have, however, many gods of the usual naturist character. These live on the hills which surround the Toda region, but the Todas affirm that there was a time



when the gods lived among men and taught them. "There is little," Mr. Rivers says (p. 447), "to support the idea that the gods are personifications of the forces of nature." In their present form they are "a development of hill-spirits," and the spirits which dwell on the hills are probably ancestral in origin. To the stone monuments which are still found on the hills the Todas of to-day are indifferent, but they are probably monuments of the dead, and they represent the germs of god-making. The author tells us (p. 446) that "there can be little doubt that some of the gods are deified men." Such is probably the chief goddess Teikirzi, the law-giver. The oldest and principal god has a wife and son. Each hill, each river and pool, has a god; but there is no personification of the heavenly bodies or light or thunder.

The Todas are certainly peculiarly interesting in showing us how quite an elaborate mythology may decay. They show us, Mr. Rivers says, "a stage of religious belief in which gods once believed to be real, living among men, and intervening actively in their affairs, have become shadowy beings" (p. 452). But they are equally interesting in retaining the traces of the evolution of the gods. To-day the prayers and ritual are formal, and the gods are not, apparently, believed to intervene much in human affairs. They do, however, cause evil and misfortune, and are to be propitiated. At death a soul passes to a land in the west—a land lit by the same sun as ours and rich in buffaloes and dairies. There is some vague punishment in store for the wicked,



while there is a slight touch of beatitude in the western land in the fact that it contains no pigs or rats, which would root up the soil.

A very different people, of a Mongoloid character, are the Khasis, of the Khasi hills. Mr. P. R. T. Gordon (*The Khasis*, 1914) tells us that they have "a vague belief in a future state" (p. 105), and think that the souls of those who have been properly buried will go to a "garden of God." There is no idea of punishment; and the Khasi belief that those who do not go to heaven are transformed into animals is said to have been borrowed from the Hindus. Besides the customary spirits of rivers and mountains, they have deities of the State and of wealth, and a host of village and domestic tutelary spirits. Religion, which is much involved with magic, chiefly consists in learning the name of the spirit which has sent a misfortune, or may render service, so that sacrifice may be duly offered. The cult of ancestors is an outstanding element, and Mr. Gordon thinks it "possible that the Khasi gods are merely the spirits of glorified ancestors" (p. 110). Of a high, creative god there is only a vague notion.

We need not seek further among these lowly peoples who, on the fringe of India, retain the religions of older races or ages. In their main features, which alone can be considered here, they show us the customary hierarchy of spirits. At the base are the innumerable ghosts of the dead, who now, instead of merely infesting the district or haunting the home, as they do at lower levels of culture, pass to another land. This second and

shadowy earth is put either beyond the horizon (where no native has been to explore) or in the sky or underground; and at various levels of development it begins to show a discrimination between the treatment of the good and the evil. Above these ghosts are the customary village spirits, tribal spirits, and nature spirits. In all cases they are definite and semi-material personalities, and they rather resemble ghosts elevated to a semi-divine position than concretions of a diffused spiritual energy (in which none of these peoples believe). We must, however, leave it open whether many of the nature spirits may not have been created on the model of the human ghost rather than formed by the mere process of turning ancestors into gods. As elsewhere, some of these spirits prove more important in practice than others, and tend to become higher gods; and—either from the zeal of priests, or the need of the imagination to have a maker of things, or both—one spirit generally rises towards a supreme or commanding position.

When, however, we turn from these Dravidian or Mongoloid peoples to the religious life of India we face a system, or group of systems, of such complexity and development that a volume would hardly suffice to trace the evolution. For the purpose of this sketch it will be enough to describe the religion embodied in the earliest parts of the Hindu sacred books, the Vedas, and very briefly recall the later developments which have resulted in the rich confusion of the religious life of India to-day.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The best volume on the subject is *The Religions of India*, by E. W. Hopkins (1895). For short accounts see *Hinduism*, by Sir

As in the case of China, it has been stated by Sir M. Monier-Williams and other religious writers that Indian religion, according to the Vedas, begins with monotheism, and is later degraded to the condition of polytheism. We are quite prepared to consider frankly any evidence of an early monotheism in both cases. Only a few decades ago religious writers held that monotheism was beyond the creative power of the human mind, and dawned upon the world through a revelation granted to the Hebrews. We now know that monotheism was the creed of the priests of Egypt ages before the priests of Jahveh had any organized cult, and long before a line was written of either the Chinese or the Hindu sacred books. We have, further, good reason to think that both in China and India the historical period opened with an invasion from the West. Indeed, what we have already seen in earlier chapters makes the growth of monotheism so natural that we shall not be surprised to find in any elementary civilization the cult of a single god raised so far above the cults of other gods as to give the religion a monotheistic, or henotheistic, complexion; the later term is preferable, since there are in each case many gods, and it is merely a question of distance between the chief god and the other deities.

We must remember, however, that the phrase "primitive monotheism" is relative and misleading. It has frequently been claimed that the earliest parts of the Vedas go back to 2,000, or even

3,000, B.C. Dr. Hopkins, one of the most careful students, almost ridicules this idea, and suggests that 1,000 B.C. would at least be nearer the truth. This estimate is singularly confirmed by a modern discovery. It has long been known that the Persians and Hindus formed at one time a single Aryan race, related in some measure to the races of Europe. We have discovered in Cappadocia certain treaties between the king of the Hittites and the king of Mitanni, which belong to the fourteenth century before Christ. In these the deities are called to witness the compact, and it is considered by scholars that some of the names are "almost certainly" the names of the Hindu deities Mitra, Varuna, and Indra. This would seem to indicate that as late as the fourteenth century before Christ the Hindu-Persians were still one family in the region to the east of Asia Minor and north of Palestine; and that it was later than this date when the Hindu branch of the family moved further into Asia, entered India from the north-west, and—not so much by violent conquest as by superiority of culture—mastered the country. The religion of the earliest Vedas would therefore represent a blend of the native and the Aryan religion about a thousand years before Christ, and each of these religions had behind it a hundred thousand years, or more, of evolution. To call the religion of the Vedas "primitive" is misleading.

To call it monotheism would be equally misleading were the plurality of its gods not so apparent to every reader. Sir M. Monier-Williams seems to

regard Dyaus-Pitar (the Father of Heaven, the Sky-or Day-god) as the supreme deity; but he himself enumerates other great gods. Dr. Hopkins, in his more elaborate study, says, on the contrary, that Dyaus is not very prominent in the earliest Vedas. There are, he says, three groups of deities—those of the sky, those of the air, and those of the earth. In accordance with a tendency which we have found both in Africa and America, the gods of the sky are at first the more important gods. Not only, however, do the numerous sky- or sun-gods struggle with each other and exchange functions with each other, in the familiar battle for supremacy of cults and priests, but we have in the case of India a very interesting illustration of the influence of environment on religion. Dr. Hopkins reminds us that the migration of the Aryans to a semi-tropical region would alter their ideas. The sun, which in a temperate clime was a benignant and paternal element, now becomes a fierce and at times odious power. The storms, or demons of the air, assume a mightier energy, and tend to displace the spirits of the sky. The priests, moreover, advance in culture as a settled civilization develops, and they adjust rival gods, and transform or refine their functions, by means of elaborate myths.

The earliest Vedas, which are not so naive an expression of primitive speculation as is often supposed, represent a religion already fairly advanced, and we penetrate with difficulty to the earlier period. The sun-god, under many names and in diverse forms, is the chief deity. He is

Surya (the sun), Deva (the shining one, the all-seeing eye), Vishnu (the mighty one), Savitar (the shining one), Pushan (the bestower of prosperity), and so on. His mother is the Dawn (Ushas), though at a later date the Dawn is a maid whom he amorously pursues. Her brothers, the twin Acvins, sons of Dyaus, follow her in a chariot, and may represent the twilight (twin-light, part day and part night). The sun-god is borne onward by seven yellow (golden) steeds. He slays demons, and gives wealth and children. Dyaus, whom—on the analogy of other religions—we may suppose to be an older deity, since the sky-god is generally worshipped before a sun-god, has now yielded in place to the fiery sun of India, the god of the warriors. Varuna seems to have been a sky-rain-god originally, whom the priests have converted into the ruler of the highest heaven, above the sky. Later he becomes a water-god. Aditi, the expanse, is the mother of all the gods, and may be a mythical invention of the priests.

In the middle sphere are the gods of the air: Vata (the wind-god), Indra (an obscure god of rain and lightning and sun, who rises to great popularity), the Markuts (gods of storm), Rudra (father of the cloud-born Markuts), and various rain-gods. Of the earth are Agni (the altar-fire, later god of fire generally and moral and religious ruler), Soma (the spirit of an intoxicating drink used in sacrifice), Yama (the deified first man, or generalization of ancestors), Prithivi, the earth-goddess, and so on. In time the deification of abstractions (Pity, Abun-

dance, Infinity, etc.) adds to the family; and there are many references to the spirits of mountains and rivers, and to a cult of ancestors. Immortality is a gift of the gods, but the eschatology is, as we commonly find, vague. The good pass over water to a blessed place, and the wicked join the demons in a shadowy "bottomless darkness."

We see, in a word, in spite of the priestly elaboration, a nature religion, resting on a basis of animism and ancestor worship, of so familiar a type that we need not linger over it. It passes, in the Vedas, into a mystic Pantheism which embraces or fuses all the gods in an all-pervading divinity; though the popular cult flourishes undisturbed by this philosophic speculation of the learned priests. About the seventh century begins the Brahmanic period, in which the priests themselves pose as gods, and raise to the highest position the deified abstraction which they call Brahma. The old gods remain, dim and overclouded, and religion becomes more formal and ritual. In the next phase (seen in the Upanishads) Pantheism now embraces gods and men in one formula. To our modern Pantheists this is one of the most tangible indications of the legendary "wisdom of the east"; but, whatever may be thought of the value of metaphysics, this development was unhealthy in practice. It represented "a religion of sorrowing humanity," ascetic and pessimistic. The mass of the Hindus continued to cultivate their magic and their amorous and genial gods, while the few chastised their flesh or withdrew from the world.



It is in the light of this phase of Indian development that we must understand Buddhism. The civilization of India had reached a period like that we found in China, and will find in other civilizations: a period of scepticism, weariness, perplexity, sexual license and rigorous austerity, social disorder and social aspiration, civil war, melancholy, and confusion. It is a stage through which all civilizations pass: the stage in which—with the profound difference which our greater knowledge makes—we are to-day. It was, as regards religion, a period of heresies and rejections. Of the educated minority some (as now) followed the priests in their Pantheism and their sophistication of the prevailing religion; some (as now) turned entirely away from them, and declared all theology illusory. And as China produced its Lao-tse and Kung-tse, as Greece and Rome would, in a similar phase, produce Stoics and Epicureans, India produced (besides a frankly contemptuous Epicurean School) Jainism and Buddhism.

Jainism was "atheistic" (in the word of Dr. Hopkins) as regards the gods, rigorously ascetic in practice, and fantastic in its speculations about reincarnation. It admitted the eternity of both matter and spirit, and laid overpowering emphasis on the purity of the individual human spirit. Monasteries and nunneries multiplied, and India began to witness the austerities which survive in the self-tormenting fakirs. A man might slay himself to escape temptation.

Gautama, the Buddha, was another product of this age of scepticism and intellectual trouble. He



found, as Tolstoy would do, "a way"; but he did *not* establish a religion. If by Buddhism we mean the code of life taught by Buddha, we must say, as we did in the case of Kung-fu-tse, that not one of the fifty definitions of religion applies to it. It is merely the reluctance to admit that Agnosticism was the teaching of the greatest moralist of India as well as of China—that an Agnostic culture has flourished and had a profound and beneficent influence in the east for more than two thousand years—which leads to the inclusion of Confucianism and Buddhism among the religions of the world. Like Kung-fu-tse, Buddha entered into no conflict with the accepted religious ideas, but he urged his disciples, when they asked him about gods and ghosts, to abandon such questions and concentrate upon the law of love and right conduct which he preached. He slighted priests, temples, and ritual; and his habitual silence about deity makes it clear that he was Agnostic. Was there ever a sternly moral preacher who believed in God and never spoke about him? His ethic was purely human, and he expressly scorned the idea of reward or punishment. Dr. Hopkins gives some evidence (which seems disputable) that Buddha at least believed in reincarnation; but he later quotes Buddha telling a disciple that it is "unwise" to bother about either the past or future of the soul. He seems not to have thought it worth while to form a definite opinion about it. Even his doctrine of Nirvana (extinction) is so ambiguous that scholars still dispute whether it meant merely the extinction

of desire or total annihilation. The former seems to have been all that concerned Buddha. Kung-fu-tse and he were the first Secularists.

I will, therefore, not linger over the eloquent, if too ascetic, humanitarian ethic of Buddha, but briefly conclude the religious development. Brahmanism evolved into the Hinduism with which we are familiar. The eccentricities of *yogis* and charlatans increased. The Vedic gods sank into decay, and new deities, such as Krishna, obtained popularity and gathered about them all the myths and legends which entered India.<sup>1</sup> Buddhism also degenerated, deified Buddha, and became a very ceremonious religion, with monks and nuns and censors and vested priests. In the end, Islam in turn entered India as conqueror and increased the religious confusion. In our own time educated Hindus are returning to either scepticism or Pantheism.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Hopkins says that the legends about the birth of Krishna, which are so strikingly similar to the legends about the birth of Christ, are of Christian origin. It is more reasonable to conjecture that both Krishnaists and Christians used a common pre-existing material.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE FATHERS' OF EUROPE

ARBITRARY as the distinction is between the various continents, in regard to such a subject as this, we have found it a not inconvenient way of treating the religions of Africa, Asia, and America. The geographical boundaries of the continents are, except at the point where Europe, Asia, and Africa meet, also frontiers of culture, and we have been able to follow the evolution of religion within each area separately. We now approach a stage at which our procedure must begin to differ. From this point onward all the religious developments which we consider are related ultimately to Christianity, and the tributaries to that broad stream of religious traditions take their rise in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Christianity is the Mediterranean Sea of the religious world. Into it have flowed the traditions of Egypt, of the numerous peoples of nearer Asia, and of various peoples of Europe; precisely as the rivers of those regions have discharged their burdens into the large sea which lies between them.

I will therefore now take in succession what one may call the watersheds of this ultimate reservoir of beliefs and practices, and it will be most convenient to begin with Europe. The older religions of Europe

have, perhaps, contributed least and latest to the religion which has dominated it for fifteen hundred years, but they cannot be neglected in a sketch of general religious development. There is, moreover, the difficulty that the oldest religions of Europe are practically unknown to us. What was the religion of the Neanderthal race which has left its stone weapons in millions in the soil of Europe? What was the religion of the Piltdown man, or the men who cultivated art in the caverns of the Pyrenees, or even the men of the New Stone Age? We have not even reasonable grounds for conjecture. Fragments of the Neolithic race may linger among the Basques of the Pyrenees or the Picts of Scotland, but no fragments of their primitive religion remain. What have been long called the Aryan peoples obliterated the entire culture of the pre-Aryans; and Christianity in turn came to thrust underground whatever traces it found of "paganism."

We must therefore assume that religion had, in the case of the pre-Aryan population, advanced through those stages which we have discovered elsewhere, and we must be content to gather what we may of the religion of the Celts and Teutons, the Greeks and Romans. If I still use the word "Aryan" for this group of European peoples, it will be understood that I do so with reserve. It is now usually restricted to the Hindu-Persians, and the idea that we can form any satisfactory picture of a primitive Aryan stock, with a primitive Aryan culture and religion, is now generally abandoned. Yet these European peoples undoubtedly

belong to one family, and the name which is now given to them—the Caucasian peoples—indicates in what direction scholars look for the origin of the family. However that may be, their culture, as far as it is known to us, shows considerable differences in the different branches of the family, and they must be considered separately.

Dr. J. A. MacCulloch (*The Religion of the Ancient Celts*, 1911) describes for us the religion of the basic population of the United Kingdom and part of France. The name "Celt" has become ambiguous and embarrassing in modern science, since it is also given to a central European, or Alpine, race which preceded the "Aryans"; though there are even modern scholars who think that these so-called Alpines were but a local modification of the familiar Celts. Here, at least, we deal with the ancestors of the Irish, the Scots, the Welsh, and the Britons.

Dr. MacCulloch defines their religion, in the earliest phase known to us, as "a cult of nature-operations, or of life manifested in nature." The men and the women differed in their practices, as the men worshipped the animals they hunted, apologizing to them for inflicting death; an attitude we have encountered before. It seems probable that the women were entrusted with the primitive agriculture, and that among them the earth itself was, as a fruitful mother, especially regarded and ultimately deified. When the men undertook agriculture, Dr. MacCulloch suggests, the earth-goddess became an earth-god. It is unfortunate that there is so much obscurity about this interesting development.

It plainly suggests a possible evolution of totemism and animal-gods among the men, and a reason why we find goddesses of great power and popularity, constantly tending to become goddesses of love and licence, in early stages of religion.

At all events, we find among the Celts two chief classes of deities: the warrior-gods and the vegetation or fertility gods. Each tribe had its own names for these deities—no less than two hundred and seventy vegetation-gods and sixty war-gods are known—but we are quite unable to get nearer to the roots of this plurality. Our experience of more primitive peoples (especially in Africa) suggests that ancestral names and spirits, which would differ in each locality, had been transferred to the forces of growth, which became the supreme object of the cult as agriculture increased in importance. But the fundamental identity of the forces made it easier to blend a number of gods into one; and the organized priesthood, the Druids, were, as elsewhere, reducing the crowd of local spirits to a few general gods. The great festivals were, as usual, seasonal and agricultural.

Of the leading gods Roman writers, who encountered the Celts, have left us some account; but their habit of giving Celtic or Teutonic deities the names of Roman gods is somewhat confusing. Cæsar says that Mercury was the chief god of the Celts, and Dr. MacCulloch makes this intelligible by pointing out that the Greek Mercury (Hermes) was concerned with the fertility of cattle. Mars, the war-god, comes next, under scores of names.

There were also equivalents of Apollo, gods of the sky and light; though the statement that all the Aryans put at the head of their pantheon a great god of the sky and thunder, a Zeus or Jupiter or Wodan, does not seem to be true of the Celts. There was, it is true, an important thunder-god, Taranis; and there was a sun-god with a wheel for emblem, and a less clear deity with a hammer. Besides these were gods of the roads and of commerce, of the hot springs, of youth, of malt, and of the underworld (who may originally have been an earth or vegetation-god).

The goddesses were equally numerous and important. There was a goddess of perpetual fire, a goddess—in Ireland named Brigit, who has blended with a Christian saint—of industry and arts, a goddess of the chase (a Diana); while others presided over the fields, the waters, or the forests. The “May Queen” of a later Christian world seems to be a decorative survivor of one of these old Celtic goddesses. Dr. MacCulloch suggests that, when the men displaced the women from agriculture and made the presiding deity a male, the old goddess may (as is usual) have been represented as his wife; and the king and queen of May would, at the spring festival, represent the divine pair. As the king was probably the chief priest, and in Ireland at least fertility was believed to depend upon the king, Dr. MacCulloch thinks that there may have been in Ireland a situation like that suggested in *The Golden Bough*: a priest-king associated with a sacred tree, defending his office with his life

against every assailant. It is at all events probable that the original May-procession conducted a human victim to the sacrifice.

Besides these great spirits nature was peopled by crowds of the nameless ghosts we encounter among all nations, and who have become the fairies and sprites of the modern Celt. Semi-divine beings were also produced by the frequent sexual intercourse of gods and mortals, so that the Celts had long been familiar with miraculous conceptions. Ancestral spirits were honoured, and what we may presume to have been the earlier form of religion, the cult of the ghost, lingered about the home. The hearth was sacred, and the dead of the family were believed to haunt it. Although Dr. MacCulloch speaks of their offering the heads of slain enemies to the "strong shades" of their warrior ancestors, he later explains that to the Celt a dead man was not "a shade." There was, of course, a vivid belief in a continuance of life after death, but the soul was still embodied, if not in the same body. The dead lived, normally, underground, in a world which was the counterpart of this.

As is well known, there existed among the Celts a powerful body of priests called "Druids." The name has, it seems, no connection with the Greek word for "oak," as has been supposed. It means "the knowing One"; yet Dr. MacCulloch agrees that the wisdom of the Druids was merely relative to the deeper ignorance of the ordinary people. The supposed profound lore of the ancient Druids is a myth. They guarded the sacred groves, which



were the first temples, and sacrificed human victims on their stone altars. The stone circles, such as that of Stonehenge, are said to have been, not temples, but burial-places.

The calendar of the principal festivals has, in fine, a close relation to later religious development. The new year began on November 1, when the harvest had been gathered in and the gloom and blight of winter approached. The day was also regarded as a day of the dead; and it survives in the Catholic "All Souls Day" which the Church has put on the following day. Next came, on May 1, Beltane, the great festival of the spring, the concentrated magical effort to secure fertility of grain and herd and wives. The bonfires, the may-poles, the processions of mock kings and queens, were even less virile survivals of practices on which a primitive people had staked its fortunes for the summer. But these things may be read in the elegant pages of Sir J. G. Frazer. At midsummer was a similar festival, apparently a reinforcement of the magical compulsion of nature; and on August 1 was the fourth chief festival, the harvest-rejoicing, the time of rich blood and riot.

We may next turn to the Teutons, whose religious ideas and practices have been described by Professor Chantepie de la Saussaye (*The Religion of the Teutons*, 1902). The critical study of our time has reduced to smaller proportions the body of information which we may regard as an accurate account of the primitive religion of the Teutons. The famous treatise of Tacitus on the ancient Germans has long been regarded with suspicion, and the Norse poems,

which many quote as representing a pure and remote antiquity belong to the Christian era, show traces of Christian influence, and embody a mythology which the poets themselves have largely fabricated. That the Teutons had, like the Celts, sacred groves and a practice of human sacrifice we know; and it is very probable that the wheel which is found on many early monuments is (as among the Celts) a symbol of the sun or sun-god. But the hammer of Thor seems to be a late development or importation. However, we will survey the chief deities described by Professor de la Saussaye.

The names of our days of the week give us an idea of the chief deities in the time of the Romans. The Teutons had, of course, no seven days' week, and the Roman names were closely followed when the week was adopted. There was, for instance, no cult of the sun and moon, so that Sunday and Monday are purely Roman; and the same must be said of Saturday (Saturn's Day). The other days, however, faithfully indicate that Tiu, Wodan, Thor, and Frigg were at an early date the most prominent figures of the Teuton family of gods. There are indications that Tiu (or Tiwaz, or Zio) was at first the chief god, and, although the name is not now regarded as equivalent to "sky," he was a sky-god. In the course of time he became a war-god, having a sword-handle (not unlike a cross) for his emblem. Wodan (or Odin) comes from a root which means "to blow," and he must have been originally the god of the winds, though he later became the god also of agriculture, war, and poetry. He became

more popular than Tiu; just as in India the gods of the air displaced in popularity the gods of the sky. Donar, or Thor, the thunder-god, also cared for agriculture and fertility; and marriages were mostly made on his day. Frija, or Frigg, was an old but (in historic times) vaguely conceived goddess, the house-wife of the divine family, passing from Tiu to Wodan when the latter god became supreme.

These four are, as we know them, plainly modified by a long development. It is believed that Tiu and Frigg were originally god and goddess of the sky, Wodan of the wind, and Donar of the thunder. Thus we have a simple nature religion of a familiar kind. There must, of course, have been many more deities even in the early stage, and we may be confident that Nerthus, or Mother-Earth, was one of these. Her spring festival was one of the most popular, and is one of the sources of the May Queen and Green Man and other May masquerades which innocently linger among the Christian peasants of Europe. Originally they were part of a very serious semi-magical, semi-religious rite, with procession and human sacrifices, for ensuring a full triumph of the vegetation force in the dawning summer.

To Nerthus the Teutons assigned a male companion, Njordr, god of the sea; and there was a similar divine pair, Freyr and Freyja, in connection with fertility. Baldr ("Balder the Fair") seems to be a late product of the myth-making faculty. The legend was that his mother Frigg, learning that his life was in danger, put all dangerous objects in nature under oath not to kill him. But his astute

enemy saw that she had neglected the harmless mistletoe, and he made an arrow of this and killed Baldr. This is clearly a myth of the annual killing of the sun, and is, like all such myths, comparatively late. In the poetic period legends were developed and invented, and gods made, with such ease that in Bragi, a Swedish god of poetry, we recognize a human poet of the ninth century. There were also Heimdaler (the guardian of the home of the gods against the giants), Loki (an obscure and apparently poet-made god, a spirit of cunning and evil), Holda and Perchta (goddesses of the dead), Tampana (goddess of fertility, with an autumn festival), and other minor deities.

As is well known, the Teutons filled nature with all kinds of beings, spiritual and material, besides the gods; but here again we must not, as has been done so frequently, take the creations of the Norse poets of the Christian Era to be outcomes of the primitive Teutonic imagination. Indeed, the Norse poets were not the only originators, since, according to Professor de la Saussaye, the goddesses Hreda and Eostre (who has often been quoted as the pagan origin of Easter) "are at present usually regarded as the invention of Bede" (p. 272). The Walkyries and Norns of Teutonic mythology are poetic elaborations. Walhalla, the sky-home of the warriors, and even Hel (the goddess of the dark and dismal underworld for common souls), seem also to have been made by the Scandinavian poets. At the time of their activity the Norsemen were in close touch, across Russia, with the culture of the south, and it

is a great mistake to regard the Norse poetry as a mere expression of primitive tradition. It is, like the Homeric poetry for Greece or the priestly writings for Judæa, a transformation of the early religion.

As far as we can judge, the primitive religion is of the type we have found at the same level of culture elsewhere. The dead lived on; and, as one of the chief names for the soul means literally "follower," it seems to me that here again the shadow was the first germ of religion. Where the dead lived the early Teutons were undecided. They had apparently reached the idea of survival when the tribes had formed a common family, and all were agreed upon it; but the speculations about the next world reflect the later dispersal of the tribes. Some put the souls in the air, some in the springs, some in an island beyond the sea. Others—whom we are tempted to regard as the more primitive—fancied that the ghosts haunted the house; and in the end, as I said, we get a growing conception of Heaven (Walhalla) for the good (the bloodiest warriors) and Hel: a development we have encountered many times. Late poetry conceived the rainbow as the bridge by which warrior souls passed to sky-land.

Originally, therefore, nature would be filled by the rude imagination with the ghosts of the dead. Next we find in the primitive Teutonic religion a crowd of nameless nature spirits, living in the forests and the springs, even entering the bodies of animals (the were-wolf, etc.); and beyond these again a race of

preternatural elves, witches, giants, dwarfs, and so on. These seem to me to be, as elsewhere, the ghosts of the dead now detached from human memory, and so divested of humanity. Crowning the whole spirit population are the nature-gods I described; and I leave it open, as before, since positive evidence is out of the question, whether these named spirits of great power were originally ancestors or were created to explain phenomena. Their chief festivals, in the spring (Walpurgis Night) and autumn, are parallel to those of other peoples. The mid-winter festival of Yule is now believed to be late, and to show Christian influence.

We will next take the Greeks, upon whose religion we have a very large literature.<sup>1</sup> Here again the evolutionary study is as important as it is difficult. The familiar Olympian family of gods is a creation of the Homeric poets, just as the Scandinavian family of gods is of the Scaldic and Eddic poets. Yet when we set aside all literature we have little material for determining the early and primitive form of the religion. Some Christian writers have even, as in the case of the Teutons, the Celts, the Chinese, etc., maintained that the primitive religion was monotheistic; but we may place that theory on a level with the belief that the first man was created, or that Moses wrote the Pentateuch.

It is well known that the ancestors of what we

<sup>1</sup> I may recommend *A Handbook of Greek Religion*, by A. Fairbanks (1910), or Miss J. E. Harrison's small manual, *The Religion of Ancient Greece* (1905). Miss Harrison's larger work, *Themis* (1912), is much too subtle and sophisticated an interpretation of primitive Greek religion.

commonly call the Greeks (or Hellenes) were a branch of the barbaric "Aryan" family who descended from the north about the beginning of the first millennium before Christ. They at first destroyed the civilized cities which had, under Egyptian influence, been founded in the south of Greece, but they gradually blended with the older inhabitants, and in their turn built up the brilliant civilization of classic times.

Herodotus, the Greek historian, tells us that the earlier inhabitants, the Pelasgians, had at first had no gods with individual names, but they borrowed names from other nations, especially the Egyptians, to bestow upon their spirits. There is probably some exaggeration in this, since a people at the level of the Pelasgians always has some outstanding named spirits; but the general situation it suggests is in harmony with what we have seen elsewhere. There was a cult of ancestors, and of great numbers of spirits in nature. Herodotus says that they offered sacrifice to Hercules as a hero; and we know from other sources that sacred stones and stone pillars received a measure of worship, and that spirits were regarded as living in springs, trees, and animals.

It is more difficult to say how far there were originally outstanding spirits, whom we may call deities, controlling the larger elements of nature, and who they were before the Homeric poets began their activity. Probably the Greeks brought with them from the common "Aryan" stock a cult of the great sky-god Zeus, the earth-mother-goddess



Demeter, the water-god Poseidon, the goddess of the hearth Hestia, and the goddess Athene, whose original function is obscure. Dionysus (of the vine) is regarded by some as original. Apollo (the sun-god), Aphrodite (of love), Hermes (Mercury), Ares (Mars), Cybele, and others, seem to have been adopted. But there was nothing like a central religious authority in that land of city-States, and every local shrine had its own name or names of gods, so that a large amount of transference and fusion took place in the course of time. We may take it as clear that the Greeks had at first great spirits of the sky, the air, water, fire, and fertility; and that the greatest of all was the sky-god Zeus, who dwelt on the cloud-clad summit of Mount Olympus. The others were gradually fused together—probably a score of earth-goddesses blend in Demeter (originally Ge or Gaia, the Earth)—or brought into relation with Zeus (Hera as his wife, Athene as his daughter, and so on). Until about the eighth century there was a good deal of migrating and fusing and re-settling, and gods would have to be adjusted. City life, moreover, now began to modify the attitude of a large proportion of the people, and the gods which had been of deep interest to shepherds and tillers of the soil must now adopt new attributes. Athene becomes goddess of culture. Apollo transcends Dionysus.

From the eighth century onward the development is even more rapid, because the settled Greek civilization now opens its pores fully to the influence of the greater civilizations beyond the Mediterranean.



The Greeks spread to Asia Minor, and there met the Asiatics. Presently Greeks made the grand tour of Egypt and discussed with priests who had already developed religion as far as monotheism. Across Asia Minor, too, and across the Mediterranean, came representatives of the passionate cults of Syria and the religions of Persia. Many believe that even Buddhistic ideas reached Greece.

Here I may ignore the cults which were directly imported from Egypt or Asia. We will consider them in their place. Indeed, the effect on the development of the Greek cults themselves need not be treated at any length. It is generally said that in the seventh century there was a great religious revival, possibly connected with the rise to political power of the ignorant people; for Greece passed quickly through the political phases of royalty and aristocracy, and, in most places, adopted complete democracy. Among the educated Greeks, however, the new ferment naturally encouraged scepticism, and a situation arose similar to that which we found, a little earlier, in China and India. As early as the seventh century the Greeks of Asia Minor began the development of a philosophy of nature of what would now be called a "materialistic" character. Many of the thinkers made graceful references to the gods as Kung-tse had done, for it was still a crime against society to be an Atheist; but Atheism, we know from the Athenian writers, was common enough, and it is not probable that any educated Athenian after the Persian invasion believed any longer in Zeus and Athene.

On the other hand, the religious temperament sought its satisfaction in new forms. Pythagoras, with some resemblance to Buddha, founded ascetic, though entirely heterodox, communities. Others flocked to the "mysteries" which were held or performed in connection with special shrines. The most famous of these shrines was at Eleusis. It is probable that at this agricultural centre there was an ancient cult of the earth-goddess Demeter, with peculiar features, and that when the Athenians brought it under their influence the "mysteries" were opened to initiates from any part of Greece. That there was any profound secret doctrine imparted there is not believed by modern scholars. It is more likely that the central part of the "Eleusinian mysteries" was a sacred play or series of tableaux representing the return from the underworld of Persephone to her mother Demeter. There is ground for thinking that the drama included also the birth of Iacchus (or Dionysus); much as the birth of Christ is represented in Catholic churches at Christmas, or the birth of Horus was represented in Egyptian temples. It seems to have been an allegory, or mystery-play, of the annual death and re-birth of vegetation (which sinks to the underworld) and the birth of a new sun. But an ascetic discipline and a purification-rite were prescribed for initiates to the mysteries, and they gathered together much of the religious feeling of the Greek cities.

The development of Roman religion proceeded on similar lines. Here again the "Aryan" immigrants from the north encountered and mingled with an

earlier people, the Etruscans. Ancient Roman writers and archæological discoveries have given us a scanty knowledge of the religion of the Etruscans, but it seems to have reached an elaborate stage. The cult of the dead was still practised, and there were express rites for deifying ancestors. We will, however, not at once conclude that the gods of the Etruscans were deified ancestors. From the Roman writers we learn that they were the familiar lords of the elements of nature. There was the great sky-god Tinia, the equivalent of Tiu and Zeus and Jupiter; and there were counterparts of Vulcan, Bacchus, Mercury, Venus, and Aurora. An old Etruscan vegetation-god, Vertumnus, was also adopted by the Romans, and had statues in the streets of Rome, but was little worshipped. A god of the underworld, Mantus, is believed to have given a name to the city of Mantua; and there were deities of love, destiny, the sun, and so on.

The Etruscans, who were civilized, had an elaborate priesthood and sacred calendar (on which the Roman calendar seems to have been based), and their domestic religion was the same as that of the Romans. There were special spirits in charge of the store-room, the kitchen, and the hearth. In the settlement of the future of the ghost also they were very advanced. Like the Romans and most peoples, they placed the dead in an underworld, yet continued to make offerings to them as if they still haunted the home. The future lot of the majority in the underworld was of the vague and hazy kind which we commonly find among peoples who have

advanced beyond the idea of a happy hunting-ground, yet have not attained to the idea of a state of spiritual bliss. There was, however, a mild sort of heaven in the teaching of the Etruscan priests; and there was a very horrid hell for the wicked.

The earliest form of the Roman religion is as difficult to ascertain as we found that of Greece, but the few satisfactory indications show, as we should expect, that it was similar to that of the early Greeks. There was a cult of stones, of trees and groves, and of a few animals (like the wolf). Boundary stones, which are of obvious importance among a pastoral and agricultural people, were invested with so sacred a character that a special god of boundaries, *Terminus*, was imagined. Meteoric stones were cherished, and stones which must have been at one time used in the magical production of rain (perhaps by pouring water over them) survived as sacred stones into the historic period. So, in regard to woods, a farmer would still, in the historical period, offer a prayer or apology to the indwelling spirit of a wood when he intended to cut it down and enlarge his corn-fields. Another lingering custom was that after the birth of a child three men performed, at the threshold of the house, a mystic ceremony which was very plainly connected with the belief in evil spirits.<sup>1</sup>

The primitive condition to which these indications point is the same as we have found elsewhere. The Roman people had some distinction in the way in

<sup>1</sup> A convenient summary of Roman religion is Mr. C. Bailey's *Religion of Ancient Rome* (1907).

which they maintained the domestic cult of spirits. The cult of the Lares and Penates long remained a distinctive Roman practice, and well into the imperial period even wealthy and cultivated Romans had in their mansions little shrines which contained small images of their ancestors. The Lar, or Lares, may have been a kind of generalization of ancestral spirits; the Penates were the spirits who guarded the store (*penus*). An equally sacred character clung to the hearth, where the daughters looked to the maintenance of the fire. The goddess Vesta was, originally, "the blazing hearth," and the Roman development is in this respect much the same as we have seen among Bantu tribes and elsewhere. The king's fire was maintained with especial care, presumably at first by his daughters. As time went on a consecrated group of maids (Vestal Virgins) were entrusted with the function. Their house and the ancient temple of Vesta in the Forum were next to the old "Royal House," and the splendid cult of Vesta in later Rome had thus been plainly developed from the original simple need to keep fire always burning. Janus, the guardian spirit of the threshold, was another domestic spirit who later became a god. As time went on he became the patron or guardian of doors (*januæ*) generally; and it may have been the simple circumstance that people passed both in and out under his protection that gave him his character of two-faced god.

The home remained the fundamental element of the State at Rome far into the historical period.

As is well known, the father had power even of life and death over his wife, children, and slaves, and we are not surprised to find that he was also the domestic priest. His sons, dressed in short ceremonial tunics, assisted in the sacrifice; and we may see in them the models of the deacon (assistant) and sub-deacon (under-assistant) of a Roman Catholic ceremony to-day. There were, in addition, two general festivals in honour of the spirits of the dead. The Parentalia in February honoured the friendly ghosts, or honoured the dead in their friendly aspect. The Lemuria, in May, which seems to have been an older institution, reflects the earlier phase in which the spirits of the dead are nervously regarded as malevolent. The father of the family went over the house performing an ancient and elaborate ritual. He spat black beans upon the floor, saying: "With these I redeem me and mine." As we find elsewhere, advance in civilization brought a less nervous attitude towards the dead, whose "shades" (*umbræ*) were located in a misty and unsatisfactory underworld.

It is said that the early Romans differed also from other peoples at the same stage of development in the fact that they had no gods (*dei*), but merely prominent spirits or powers (*numina*). The distinction is, however, merely nominal, for their *numina* were of the same character as the outstanding spirits which are in all other cases called "gods." Jupiter, the sky- and thunder-god, was the precise equivalent of Zeus and Tiu. Mars was originally the spirit of agriculture, who, as the wars

of the Romans increased, became the spirit of the warriors. Quirinus, a hill-god at Rome, may have been originally a vegetation-spirit of some incorporated people. Minerva seems to have been borrowed from the Etruscans, Diana from the Latins, and Hercules and Castor from the Greeks. As the various peoples of Italy were fused together, there was the usual fusion, marriage, and systematic relation of such of their deities as could not be suppressed. Sir J. G. Frazer has pointed out, for instance, that Janus (or Dianus) and Diana may have been but another form of Jupiter and Juno.

In the earlier days there had been no temples or images of the gods, and the annual festivals had occurred at the customary seasonal periods. In March there had been sacrifice to Mars (as god of agriculture), and in April to Tellus (the earth-deity). In the autumn there was the usual celebration in gratitude for the harvest, and at midwinter (about December 17 to 22) occurred the famous and boisterous Saturnalia. As the name Saturn indicates, the midwinter must have been originally "sowing-time," and Saturn the deity—older than Jupiter, if we may trust the legends—who presided over the growth of the corn. The dolls (*puppæ*) which Romans bought during this festival (and which Christians innocently hang on their Christmas trees to-day) plainly tell that once human sacrifices had been offered to Saturn at the midwinter festival, and the dolls had become substitutes for them.

Contact with the Etruscan civilization first modi-



fied this primitive religion, and from the fifth century onward contact with Greece altered it to the point of demoralization. The Greek gods—Apollo, Dionysus, Mercury, Asclepius, etc.—were adopted, and the gods and goddesses of the east and Egypt followed quickly upon them. Isis and Serapis of Egypt, Mithra of Persia, the Syrian “mother of the gods,” secured abundant worshippers. The Roman temperament was, in fact, so genially and liberally polytheistic that deities were imagined, and then worshipped, with remarkable facility. The Roman experience must be kept carefully in mind when we are tempted to regard all deities as deified ancestors. Scores of their “gods” were obviously not ancestors, but deified processes or abstractions. In his *City of God* (Bk. iv, c. ii, and Bk. vi, c. ix) St. Augustine makes merry over the multitude of gods of the pagans. He represents that some of these were deified men, such as Priapus; of whose deification, as bluntly described by Augustine, a modern writer must hesitate to speak. We know, at least, that the Romans at once accepted the deification of their Emperors, which should give us the true measure of what they meant by “gods.” But a large number of their deities (Educa, Potina, Liberus, Lucina, Cunina, Mena, Vaticanus, Subigus, Prema, Volupa, Paventia, Pilumnus, Deverra, etc.) are merely the abstract names, turned into a concrete form, of the functions over which they were supposed to preside. These were old Roman deities, and probably no one believed in them in the days of Augustine.



The last group of the European " Aryans " whom I may notice are the Slavs, and little need be said of them. Early Russian writers tell us that before their conversion to Christianity the Slavs had no priests, temples, or idols. They had a vivid belief in the spirits of the hearth and the home, who might give them help, and the generally mischievous spirits of the forest and the river. They had a supreme sky-god, Svarog, with a divine son, Dajbog; a fire-god named Ogonu; and a thunder-god, Perun, to whom human sacrifices were made.

It will be seen therefore that, although we cannot speak of a primitive family of gods cherished by a primitive Aryan people, the process of religious development is everywhere the same. The primitive cult of the dead lingers among each people, and in each case it plainly indicates that the ghosts of the dead were originally believed to haunt the home. In each people, too, we find the belief that myriads of nameless spirits—human ghosts which have in the course of time lost their labels, perhaps—infest the field, the forest, the spring, and the river. In each case, again, the dominant or semi-divine spirits, with names, control the same elements and undergo a like development. At first they are the lords of the sky, the air, and the earth, or of particular phenomena of sky, air, and earth. Then the fusion or overlapping of tribes relates them to each other and alters their functions; next the rise of priests and poets further modifies them and invents myths for them; in a third stage the building of cities invests them with cultural rather than agricultural

and pastoral attributes ; and at length, as in China and India, Athens and Rome, the culture supersedes the gods, and religion dissolves in Confucianism, Buddhism, Stoicism, or Epicureanism.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE RELIGION OF THE FIRST CIVILIZATIONS

As we approach the upper branches of the tree of religious development we must increasingly depart from the standard of minute research which it was possible to maintain in the earlier chapters. Of this I warned the reader from the start. We have in the earlier stages to deal with so simple a mental product that we may in a leisurely way examine its every aspect—the beliefs, the practices, the admixture of magic, the sacred objects or houses, and the elementary priesthood. As man rises towards civilization the religious growth becomes so luxuriant that we must here omit entirely the elaborate mythology and ritual and priesthood, and give only a meagre outline of the main objects of the cult. Therefore I proposed to deal satisfactorily with the evolution of primitive religion at one end of the scale and the evolution of Christianity at the other; and I warned the reader that of the intervening religions I should say enough merely to make broadly intelligible the immense variety of the religions which now cover the globe or are embalmed in the pages of history, and to prepare him to understand certain quaint and old-world elements of Christianity itself.

The second of these considerations now reinforces the first. We come to religions which have materially contributed to the Christian synthesis. We reach the threshold of civilization and have to note carefully how, under the conservative influence of priests, naive ideas of barbaric man are converted into myths with which even the educated intellect may dally; how the crude nature forces, or the uncouth beings who are supposed to control them, become moral legislators; how, as petty chiefdoms or kingdoms are fused in some great empire, their petty spiritual rulers blend into a supreme spiritual monarch of the universe. We saw this, to some extent, in the last two chapters; but the process now becomes more interesting. The stream of civilization which we shall observe taking its rise in the valley of the Nile and the valley of the Euphrates and Tigris is but the beginning of the stream on which we float to-day. In the course of thousands of years it reached Europe, and in the religious elements of European civilization to-day we shall find myths and rites which it has borne to us from the barbaric age which preceded the first culture of Egypt.

It seems probable that, before the Egyptian race with which we are familiar settled in the fertile valley of the Nile, it was occupied by black tribes akin to those we have studied in an earlier chapter. The scanty traces which we can gather of their religion suggest beliefs and practices similar to those of the Nilotic negroes, and we will not linger over them. Some thousands of years before Christ the

valley was invaded by, it is generally believed, Bedouin tribes from the direction of the Isthmus of Suez, and out of the long and stimulating clash of cultures there issued at length the first shoots of what we call civilization. We presently find two large kingdoms, of Upper and Lower Egypt, which unite and separate again, and are at last firmly combined (probably about 3315 B.C.) under the first dynasty of the historic kings of Egypt. The earliest documents known to us represent a relatively advanced stage in this confusing development, which would assuredly mean, as we have seen elsewhere, a fusion and transformation of cults; but the patient exploration of several generations of Egyptologists has yielded us a fair acquaintance with the course of religious development.<sup>1</sup>

Our earliest satisfactory glance at the condition of Egypt discovers a multitude of gods with local and limited spheres of influence. Apparently—as we have found so frequently, even among so homogeneous a people as the early Teutons—each tribe brought with it a deity, or group of deities, bearing names peculiar to that tribe. But the objects or forces in nature upon which the primitive tribes had imposed these divine and imaginary personalities were fundamentally the same in every locality. The sun and moon, the trees and rivers, fire and water, the fertility of field or cattle, made the same appeal everywhere to the developing mind of man; and, whether the names bestowed upon the indwelling

<sup>1</sup> See, especially, Dr. G. Steindorff's *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians* (1905).

spirits were the names of outstanding ancestors, who had been thought great enough to control the elements, or were names of the elements themselves in a lost tongue, the identity of their supposed functions would lend itself to an identification or fusion of the spirits.

In this we recognize a stage of religious evolution with which we are familiar. The only feature which merits particular attention in early Egypt, though it is by no means peculiar to Egypt, is the association of these spirits with certain animals. The narrow-minded Christian of our day who halts before a mummified cat or ape, or an idol with the head of a hawk or a crocodile, in the Egyptian gallery of a modern museum, and expresses his disdain of a people who "worshipped these things," is not usually well-instructed. They represent a religion of ten thousand years ago (maintained by conservatism in a later age), and it may be that the European of ten thousand years hence will halt with equal astonishment in some archæological museum before specimens of the hymns that are sung in Christian temples to-day, or the figures of the objects of worship which adorn even a Brompton Oratory or a French cathedral.

We have in all parts of the world found a tendency to see a peculiar manifestation of superhuman power in striking animals. The Bushman associates the mantis with 'Kaang; the Bantu sees spirits in black snakes or lions; the Melanesian in sharks; the Amerind in coyotes or ravens; the Mexican in humming-birds; the European in wolves. These

things are to primitive man more wonderful than men, and quite as wonderful as trees, rivers, or stars. So the various tribes of ancient Egypt associated their spirits with the ibis, the hawk, the crocodile, the ichneumon, the wild cat, the ape, and so on. Some French writers have contended that all religion passed through this stage.<sup>1</sup> We have not found this, but we have seen the process often enough to understand it. It may or may not imply an earlier 'totemism'. In any case, man's spirits grow larger with his culture, and in the end we have deities associated with the hawk, the crocodile, and so on. Art fixes the form so deeply in the popular imagination that priests, even when they themselves outgrow the belief, are not more able or willing to attack the popular prejudice than a modern priest who ceases to believe in the virgin-birth of Christ or the anthropomorphic vindictiveness of God.

Thus we find in the early civilization of Egypt a great number of gods, each connected with a particular city or region, and most of them associated with sacred animals. Sobek, the water-god of the Fayoum lake district, has the form of a crocodile (in which a spirit dwelling in the water might very well be embodied). The god of Mendes and the god (Khnum) of the cataract region take the form of a goat. Amon of Thebes was figured as a ram; the god of Siut as a wolf; Thout of Hermupolis as a baboon; Khons of Thebes as a hawk; Hathor

<sup>1</sup> See G. Foucart's *Histoire des Religions* (1912) and the works of S. Reinach.

of Dendera as a cow. Some were crudely represented by stakes, trees, or heaps of stones; all relics of stages we have seen earlier. During the second dynasty the images of the gods advanced to the human form, but tradition was so strong that they retained their animal heads or tails. Myths began to make them more plausible. The sacred bull of Memphis, for instance, was impregnated in a cow by a flash of lightning.

There were, as usual, swarms of minor spirits dwelling in trees, stones, or waters; but we will pass over these familiar relics of the earlier phases of religion and consider the gods. The various deities which make the rich confusion of later Egyptian religion are at first intelligible as the divine patrons of individual cities or localities; the one or few spirits which have survived the struggle for life among cults and priests which we have often encountered. Amon was of Thebes, Ptah of Memphis, Set of Ombos, Horus of Behdet, Osiris of Busiris, Neit of Sais, Hathor of Dendera, Sekhmet of Memphis, Min of Koptos, Thout of Hermupolis. The original functions of each are generally lost, but Amon was a god of fertility; Min the protector of herds and roads; Sekhmet a goddess of war (probably a secondary attribute); Hathor the goddess of love and joy (probably secondary); Thout a moon-god, and Horus a sun-god. We already see their functions changing and rising. Some were simply "he of Edfu," and so on, or "the mighty one" of such a town.

The fortune of each of these obviously depended



on the fortune of his town or principality, and before the historic period opens we find one or other making progress in divinity. Horus was the god of Behdet, which became the capital of Lower Egypt. Set was the god of Ombos, the chief city of the Upper Kingdom. Horus and Set, therefore, assume a metropolitan importance and rise above or extinguish mere provincial deities. In a later political shuffle the region of Horus gains supremacy, and the priests adjust the gods in their usual fashion. Horus becomes a sun-god. He is figured as a brilliant falcon showering light from the sky, the deliverer of men from darkness; and Set is now represented as a malignant being, the husband of darkness, who is conquered by Horus every morning. With the unification of Egypt all the chief deities have to be accommodated in a divine family, and the procedure follows a familiar line. What we may presume to be very old deities—Geb (god of the earth) and Nut (the sky-goddess)—are the parents of Osiris and Set, Isis and Nephthys. Other priests make *their* god fundamental. A Heliopolis legend, for instance, puts in the beginning a great waste of water (analogous to the “deep” of the Babylonians and Hebrews) containing the seeds of all things; and out of it emerge the great gods, Ra (of the sun), Geb (of the earth), Nut (of the sky), and Show (of the air). The value of the Nile (which was deified) to Egypt would easily suggest water as the first principle, and the water-god as primeval.

The combinations are numerous, and it is piquant to us, who compress centuries into a single picture,

to see how the august powers vary with each political change. One combination deserves special attention. Osiris was at first, as I said, the lord of Bubastis, and Horus of Behdet; in much the same way as two medieval saints presided over two Italian towns in the Middle Ages. Human accident gave each the rank of a great god, and they had to be related to each other and to the other gods. The legend was fabricated that Osiris (whose original function is not positively known, and many are convinced that he is a deified historic king) travelled about the earth, teaching and civilizing, and that, when he returned to his kingdom of Egypt, his wicked brother Set killed him and threw the body into the Nile. Isis, the sister and wife of Osiris, then searched for and found the body, but Set recovered it and tore it into fourteen parts (a number carefully adapted, no doubt, to the recognized "graves of Osiris"). Isis buried these in different regions, and Horus, who now appears as the son of Isis and Osiris, took vengeance on the wicked Set. As Horus was conceived after the death of Osiris, he was born of the virgin-mother Isis.

This myth—of which Sir J. G. Frazer has made a masterly study in his *Adonis Attis Osiris*—is one of the Egyptian elements which deserve special attention. We know it in full only in late versions, but the Pyramid Texts, which seem to go back to the fourth millennium before Christ, prove that in some form it existed then, and even earlier. Its significance is that it familiarized the ancient world, wherever Egyptian influence spread, with the idea

of a slain and resurrected god and a miraculous conception. The Egyptian legend depicts Isis and her sister mourning over the body of Osiris, and the supreme god, Ra, sending a subordinate to restore him to life. Osiris then descended, living, to the underworld, and became thenceforth Ruler and Judge of the Dead. Every human being that died had to pass his tribunal, and the trial of the soul, as reflected in *The Book of the Dead*, was based upon just such an ethic as we recognize to-day. Thus not only was every Egyptian familiar with the idea of a beneficent and helpful god who, living among men, had been slain, had returned to life, and was the judge and rewarder of the dead, but an annual ceremony, or long series of ceremonies, of great solemnity, culminating in the exhibition of an effigy of Osiris on a bier in a sepulchre, became the quite outstanding feature of popular religious life. That this myth symbolized the annual slaying and resurrection of the earth's vegetation, if not of the corn in particular, is now generally agreed; but it is the doctrinal and ethical character of it which chiefly concerns us. We shall see that the other great stream of religious belief, which flows towards the Mediterranean from the south-east, brings with it a similar legend.

The parts of Isis and Horus must also be noted. Everything connected with the tender god who had thus been cruelly slain—the god whose ritual annually drew tears from the soft hearts of millions of women—became popular. Isis outstripped her mother (the older sky-goddess) in popularity, and

her son Horus, the champion of light against the dark forces of Set, became the hero among the gods. Mother and son occupied at an early date a commanding position in the affection of the Egyptians, and the time came—at what period we cannot say, but long before the Christian era—when one of the most popular functions of the temple was to offer to the people, about the winter solstice, a scenic representation of the birth of the infant Horus, with the virgin-mother standing beside the babe.<sup>1</sup> There is reason in the case of Horus to regard the myth as an allegory of the re-birth of the sun. However that may be, Egyptian religion early familiarized the world with the idea of a slain and risen god, and the miraculous birth of a divine babe in mid-winter; and at least in later (but pre-Christian) times the divine mother was represented as a virgin and a patroness of purity. Even her mother Nut was in later times regarded as a virgin.

Another point that merits especial attention is that educated Egyptians reached the stage of monotheism, and for a time it was imposed upon the kingdom. Through all the vicissitudes of the gods the sun-god Ra, championed by the priests of Heliopolis, made continuous progress. His symbol, the obelisk, multiplied in Egypt, and at length the kings of the fifth dynasty, who are believed to have descended from a priest of Ra, made him the

<sup>1</sup> See the *Paschal Chronicle* (Migne ed., XCII, col. 385) and the Roman writer Macrobius in his *Saturnalia* (I, 18). The later Greeks similarly represented the birth of Dionysus on December 25, and the Mithraists (as we shall see) that of Mithra. See my *Bankruptcy of Religion*, p. 169.

“supreme being.” Later kings, who came from Thebes, displaced him in favour of the Theban deity Amon; but the priests of Heliopolis at length won the great Amenophis IV, of the fourteenth century before Christ, and the images and cults of all other gods were suppressed. Under the name of Aten (the solar disc) the sun-god, or the living sun, was now made the sole official deity of the Egyptians, and in the abundant literature of the time we find a language which often approaches that of the New Testament. Aten is the supreme ruler of the physical as well as the moral world. He is the prime mover, the feeder and preserver of all life, the stern guardian of moral law, the “Lord of Right,” the maker and merciful deliverer of man. But neither rival priests nor the people were willing to submit to this divine monopoly, and at the death of Amenophis the new god fell from his privileged position.

The last god to hold supreme power in Egypt's religious world was Serapis, whose name (though he is supposed to have been introduced by Ptolemy I from Pontus) is said to be a compound of Osiris and Apis, and in whose image the functions of sky-god and god of the underworld were united. The ethical culture of Egypt had now passed (as in India) into the inevitable ascetic stage, and, while the priests of Serapis anticipated in their austerities the horrors of the Christian monasticism of the Thebaid, the women cultivated, under the patronage of Isis, a sentimental virtuousness which a later generation would cultivate in the name of Mary. In many

respects the later cult of Isis, the divine virgin mother and tender guardian of purity, provided the material for the cult of Mary. So close did the last phase come, in ethical respects, to Christianity that some have sought to represent Christ as merely a Judaic version of Serapis, and statues of Isis have been mistaken for statues of Mary.

In fine, we must note the peculiar stress which the Egyptians laid from a very early date on personal survival and the ethical judgment of the dead. This was, as is well known, the permanent and essential element of Egyptian religion. While Greeks and Babylonians granted the soul but a dim and unsatisfactory continuance in a vague underworld, while Buddha and Kung-tse brushed aside all consideration of a life after death, the Egyptians held throughout their long history a most vivid and practical belief in the life after death.

In the very earliest phases we seem to see the customary uncertainty. Some believed that the dead lived on in a second and shadowy world akin to this; some imagined them passing to the sky; some put them underground, in a material world lit by the same sun as this. We usually find a people, as it advances, realizing the puerility of these conceptions, and leaving the future of the soul vague and misty. But the Egyptians soon formed a very definite idea of the underworld and its life, and it is significant that our scholars have given the name of *The Book of the Dead* to their ancient sacred writing. At death the soul was conducted by the jackal-headed Anubis to the hall of Osiris.

There the dead man's heart was weighed. If the evil outweighed the good, the soul was—it was generally believed—swallowed by a hippopotamus. There was no eternal torment for the wicked. The good had an eternity of bliss; and the hope of this lot and the strictly moral nature of the scrutiny of their character made the Egyptian religion pre-eminently ethical. We find that in the fourth millennium before Christ the moral ideal was substantially that which any sober moralist of our time commends, and it was already vitally connected with religion.

Meantime the second great early civilization had been established in Mesopotamia. Here we find the same difficulty as elsewhere in recovering the early religion, and there is little promise in the practice, which has often been tried of recent years, of taking a known civilization and attempting to trace the growth of religion from the scanty rudiments in its lowest strata to the rites and myths we find in the ruins of its latest temples. The religion of the Babylonians is very far from being a pure growth, even as we find it reflected in the first cuneiform writings of five thousand years ago. A non-Semitic people, the Sumerians, generally believed to be akin to the Chinese, founded the civilization, and the earliest religion we know is a fusion of their culture with that of the later Semites. Our authorities can but make a few distinctions, according as the names are Sumerian or Semitic, between contributions of the one side or the other.



But in any case we get little light upon the *origin* of religion from the remains of a civilization, since any tribe which makes that advance from barbarism is already in an advanced stage of development. I will merely point out how the earliest religion we can trace is in harmony with similar stages which we have already studied, and will pay more attention to the features of the later development which have some relation to the ultimate European synthesis of myths and rites.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of the third millennium before Christ Babylonia was still a cluster of small principalities, each of which, as in Egypt, had its own nature deities. On the Sumerian or Akkadian side were Anu, the sky-god, the customary supreme being; and Ea (or Aa), the earth-god (though originally, it seems, a god of water), the god of the deep or of wisdom, the originator of all things. These are already far more than nature-gods when we first know them, but we can fairly recognize their earlier complexion. There was also a Sumerian sun-god, Shamash, of very ancient lineage; and there were a moon-god (Sin), a storm and thunder-god (Hadad), a mist-god (Bel), a fire-god (Nusku), and so on. Many of these already have moral attributes, and they have presumably absorbed other deities. At this early date Marduk is merely the sun-god of the city of Babylon; Ishtar the goddess

<sup>1</sup> See *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by M. Jastrow (1898), and (for a small summary) *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, by T. G. Pinches (1906). For the Hammurabi Code see the translation of Chilperic Edwards (1904), published by the Rationalist Press Association.



of love and war of the city of Nineveh ; and Tammuz an ancient Sumerian vegetation or fertility god.

Dr. Pinches observes that Marduk (or Merodach) was, "it seems certain," a deified Babylonian king ; and that the "Nimrod" of *Genesis* is identical with him. We know that, since they were the children, priests, and representatives of the god, Sargon and other kings were thus deified ; but it is, as usual, impossible to say how far the gods are deified ancestors—indeed, the names of most of them are the names of elements or abstractions. We have reached a stage when men become "heroes," or semi-supernatural beings, rather than gods. The crowd of nameless minor spirits remained in nature, however, to provide a later theology with legions of devils and angels. They dwelt on the hills and in trees and the winds and waters ; they caused disease, and incessantly plagued or blessed the life of man. Stones received some reverence, and probably stone images of the gods were treasured in rude sacred houses before a wealthier generation of priests and princes reared the famous seven-terraced temples of Babylonia.

The next phase is not less familiar. As cities or princedoms extend their power, the rival priests must adjust their gods, and myths and genealogies multiply. Babylon rises in power, and its god Marduk rises proportionately in prestige. The priests of Ea seem to have invented the legend of a great deluge which punished men for deserting Ea in favour of Marduk ; and the adventures of the Ea-worshipper Gilgamesh, who is saved on account

of his piety, reappear in the familiar pages of *Genesis*. Another legend, the so-called "epic of creation" (which also reappears in *Genesis*), puts at the beginning of things a primitive chaos or "deep" which produces the gods and all things. The evil principle of the deep, Tiamat (the Chaldaic form of the word for "deep" in the text of *Genesis*), then seeks to destroy the gods of the upper world and mar their work; and the latter choose the shining Marduk to go down and do battle for them against the dark forces. He slays Tiamat, makes the "firmament" of her body, puts the universe in order, and creates man; and he is therefore entitled to the chief place in the worship of the Babylonians. The aggrandizement of Jahveh by the writers of the Old Testament makes us familiar with the procedure. In another legend Ea is, in the customary way, represented as the father of Marduk. When Hammurabi welds the entire region into a great empire, about 2000 B.C., Marduk becomes the spiritual emperor, and we find the same monotheistic tendency as we found in the corresponding case of the Egyptian Ra.

It is necessary to emphasize that the Babylonian religion was scarcely less ethical than the Egyptian; that the mass of contemporary cuneiform documents—letters, prayers, hymns, etc.—no less than the text of the Hammurabi Code, reflect a standard of character, and an eagerness to conform to it, not materially different from ours. In the Hammurabi Code we have, it is true, a few survivals of older and barbaric laws or customs, but the informing

spirit is one of stricter justice than any code of European law has known until modern times. The Babylonian and the Assyrian did not, like the Egyptian, attach importance to the idea of immortality. They had reached the stage, which I have previously described, when they realized the childishness of primitive man's conception of another life akin to this, yet had acquired no definite idea of a spiritual world. Their dead wandered in a dim underworld like that of the Greeks and Romans; though Zimmern observes that we find traces of a beginning of distinction between the pleasant future of the good and the fate of the wicked. Generally, the underworld is conceived so vaguely that it has little influence on this life. But the Babylonian believed vividly that sin was punished *in* this life, and the documents we find in the ruins of the temples show that the priests insisted on justice and virtue as an indispensable condition of the favour of the gods.

In particular it must be noted that chastity was as much esteemed in ancient Babylon as in Egypt or in modern Europe. The legend that Babylon was a quite exceptional place of sexual looseness is now discredited. It is still thought by many that the worship of Ishtar was associated with sacred prostitution, and that this would set a consecrated example of licence. I will examine this practice in the next chapter. Here it need only be said that there is no proof of any such practice in the temples of Babylon, and little in any part of Babylonia; and that the marriage contracts which we find in the soil of Babylon and the stress on chastity in the

Hammurabi Code disprove the legend. In his *Adonis Attis Osiris* (I, p. 36) Sir J. G. Frazer says, following the Greek historian Herodotus:—

Thus at Babylon every woman, whether rich or poor, had once in her life to submit to the embraces of a stranger at the temple of Mylitta—that is, of Ishtar or Astarte, and to dedicate to the goddess the wages earned by this sanctified harlotry. The sacred precinct was crowded with women waiting to observe the custom. Some of them had to wait there for years.

The very implausible statement in the last two sentences should be enough to discredit the evidence of the Greek; and Dr. Jastrow, to whom Sir J. G. Frazer refers us, really says that “the rite never assumed the large proportions that he [Herodotus] reports.”<sup>1</sup> In point of fact, the marriage tablets of ancient Babylon commonly state and appreciate that the bride is chaste—and she would hardly wait until after marriage to prostitute herself—and the documents found in the soil of temples of Ishtar, the “all-powerful Mistress of Mankind” and “Queen of Heaven” (as she is called in the Old Testament), show that she was precisely a patroness of virtue. At the most we merely find traces of consecrated

<sup>1</sup> *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, p. 476. Sir J. G. Frazer also surprises us when he, noticing that the Hammurabi Code (§ 127) seems to protect the priestesses even from the suggestion of impurity, says that African experience warns us that “formal respect” for priestesses does not prove their “virtuous character.” He overlooks the fact that the paragraph in question expressly applies to any married woman as well as to priestesses. It is a plain order that they shall be above suspicion in character and repute.

prostitutes in some of the old provincial temples of Ishtar in parts of Babylonia.<sup>1</sup>

Ishtar came to occupy in Babylonia the position that Isis won in Egypt, and her connection with Tammuz has so many resemblances to the relation of Isis and Osiris, and is so important for the further course of this study, that we must examine it. Tammuz, whose full name is now generally translated "true son of the deep waters," was at first an obscure Sumerian deity who enjoyed little favour during the early Semitic period. Ishtar was the Nineveh goddess of love; and, since that abstract conception is late in religious development, we may surmise that she was originally a goddess of the fruitfulness of the earth, or of fertility in general. Tammuz—it will presently appear—seems to have had a similar character.

In the Gilgamesh epic we find Tammuz the lover of Ishtar, and there is some reference to the annual mourning over him. In some form, therefore, the legend and ritual of Ishtar and Tammuz is very ancient, and its essential features will suffice here. The legend, as told by the Greeks, is that Ishtar induced the mother of Tammuz to have intercourse with her father. When the father discovered her identity he sought vengeance, but the goddess was saved by being converted into a tree, and this tree gave birth to Tammuz. Ishtar, charmed with the child, entrusted it to the goddess of the underworld, Eres-ki-gal, who was equally charmed with Tammuz

<sup>1</sup> The evidence is given in my *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels* (1914), pp. 55-58.

and refused to give him back when Ishtar claimed him. The great god Marduk was entreated to decide between them, and he ordered that Tammuz should spend half the year in the underworld and half with Ishtar. During his sojourn below all nature must languish and wither.

There are still scholars who regard Tammuz as a sun-god, but, since the sun does not in any sense spend half the year under earth and the vegetation markedly does, it is generally believed that Tammuz is the god of the vegetal energy of nature, of fertility. It is the rite founded on this legend which interests us most. Every year, just before the summer solstice (according to the generally received calculation of the month Tammuz), the people, especially the women, of Babylonia mourned the death of Tammuz. They beat their breasts and, to the shrill music of the flute, chanted their lamentations over the fair god. An effigy of him lay on a bier, amid plants and flowers, and clouds of incense rose about it. After the mourning service the effigy was either buried or cast into the river.

Although the idea of resurrection is here implicit, since it is not really the death, but the temporary retreat of Tammuz to the land of death, that they mourn, this most popular of Babylonian ceremonies has the same significance for us as the corresponding festival of Osiris. The idea of resurrection was not, in fact, entirely implicit in Babylonia. Count Baudissin (*Adonis und Esmun*, 1911, p. 107) tells us that there are traces of a resurrection festival of

the god Marduk. However that may be, the great event of Babylonian religious life during thousands of years was, as in Egypt, an annual mourning over the death or passing of a god who will, all know, rise again. Whether Tammuz represented the corn, or the spring vegetation, or the sun, is a point which cannot be discussed here. Upon one or other aspect of nature's yearly life the two great civilizations of man's youth founded a myth of a dying and rising god, and this myth proved so rich in artistic and emotional inspiration that the festival in connection with it was the most popular and important of the old world. We have now to see how religion, either by independent growth or by contact with the Egyptian and Babylonian cultures, culminates in a similar festival, ages before the time of Christ, in the entire region of the eastern Mediterranean, and we shall then be in a position to understand Christianity.

## CHAPTER X

### THE WOMB OF CHRISTIANITY

ANY man who would understand the true course of higher religious development must expel from his mind all lingering mysticism about the moral genius of the Hebrews, the preternatural moral insight of Christ, or the remarkable and distinctive excellences of the Christian religion. He will find it much more illuminating to study the material and political conditions, and to remember that religious progress, like all other cultural advances, depends upon the contrast and clash of cultures.

In my *Story of Evolution* (p. 317) I have provided a map which gives at a glance the essential points of this philosophy. It shows the seats of the chief pre-Christian civilizations and the dates at which they were founded. The dates are, of course, uncertain and disputed, but the scheme is established at least in so far as it states the chronological sequence. Civilization began in Egypt from eight to ten thousand years ago. The second centre of civilization was established by the Sumerians, or Akkadians, near what we now call Mesopotamia, one or two thousand years later. It is obvious that in their military and commercial expansion these kingdoms were bound to move north-westward.



The African desert to the south and west, the Indian Ocean to the east, the Asiatic deserts and mountains to the north and north-east, restricted them on three sides, leaving open the path across Asia Minor and the Mediterranean towards Europe.

The vessels of the Egyptian merchants, therefore, spread over the Mediterranean, making first the easier voyage to the Syrian coast and the nearer large islands, such as Crete; while the troops of the imperialistic monarchs trod paths across Palestine to Asia Minor. Other great roads were traced across Syria, Palestine, and Asia Minor by the caravans and troops of Babylonia and Assyria. It is along these routes that we find the next civilizations rising, in the order of their nearness to the older centres of civilization. The light of the great fires that have been lit in Egypt and Mesopotamia slowly travels from point to point along the north-west route. We see new civilizations rise in Phœnicia, in Crete, in Persia, in Asia Minor, and at last on the nearest tip of Europe—Greece. Each of these has a culture of its own, for no fresh young nation is content merely to borrow, and the stimulating clash of ideas and institutions becomes steadily fiercer. Two thousand years ago the eastern coast of the Mediterranean was fringed with cosmopolitan cities into which the streams of the older cultures poured and mingled with the new; cities in which the priests and myths and gods of a score of great religions fought an intense struggle for life. This was the womb in which Christianity was conceived,

We have briefly examined the two earlier sources of Western ethical religion, and we must now examine the intermediate civilizations, the cultures which arose between the ancient empires and the much more familiar empires of Greece and Rome. First we will take the culture of the Phœnicians, the Hittites, and the Phrygians; and we will then consider the later culture of the Persians and the Hebrews, which will lead us directly to Christianity.

Since we are now looking forward to the final term, rather than backward to the rude beginnings, I will not linger over the traces of primitive religion which survive among the Phœnicians of the historical period. The Phœnicians seem to be merely the western fringe of the Semitic Canaanites, stimulated to more rapid development by their exposure to Egyptian influence; and it is probable that what we know from the Old Testament of the primitive religion of the Hebrews and their neighbours, or of the early religion of the Arabs, will apply to them.

They seem to have worshipped on the hill-tops and in the forests, and to have had the customary hierarchy of spirits, from the souls of the recently dead to the agencies which controlled the great forces of nature. An outstanding characteristic was the cult of sacred stones—meteorites in some cases, which would naturally assume a supernatural complexion, and in other cases conical stones, the precise nature of which is not clear. In the temples of the historical period, especially the temples of the goddess Ashtar (or Astarte), there was always a

conical white stone; and as she was pre-eminently a goddess of fruitfulness, and honoured by sacred prostitution, we are strongly tempted to see in it a phallic emblem. Sir J. G. Frazer points out the amusing fact that to this day Christians and Moslem at Paphos (once a great centre of the cult of Astarte) every year solemnly anoint certain stones of the old temple "in honour of the Maid of Bethlehem," and for the express purpose of securing the fertility of their women and the generative virility of their men.<sup>1</sup>

The gods of the Phœnicians seem to have been originally, for the most part, gods of earth. There were gods of the sun and moon, but—as we gather from the oaths of Hannibal to the Romans—the deities were chiefly the spirits of the rivers and woods, the meadows and trees and springs. Already in the second millennium before Christ, however, Babylon had exerted a deep influence on Phœnicia, and celestial gods or celestial attributes were common. By that time, indeed, Phœnicia had passed from pastoral to city life, and the gods had, as usual, followed the growth of intelligence of their worshippers. They were no longer the local genii of springs or forests, but the patrons and guardians of cities, the bestowers and rulers of civilization, the commanders of "the heavenly hosts."

The process had gone so far that the old names of some of the deities had been lost, and they were addressed simply as Baal ("Lord"), Melech

<sup>1</sup> *Adonis Attis Osiris*, I, 36.

("King"), or Adon (or Adonis, "Lord"). The greater deities are known, however, and they are of a familiar type. There was Melqarth, the chief deity of Tyre, an ancient sun-god, with a festival in the spring-time which—especially as there is some trace of a resurrection legend—suggests that a vegetation-god has been absorbed in the sun-god. Sin was the moon-god; Baal-Shamem the sky-god; Hadad the thunder-god. There was also a god of fire. To Melqarth of Tyre children were sacrificed—a practice of which traces are found in the Old Testament.

These older deities were, however, less important in later Phœnician life, and are less important to us, than two deities of secondary rank, Adonis and Ashtar, whose combined cult assumed the greatest popular significance. It is singular that neither has a proper name known to us, for Adonis merely means "the Lord," and Ashtar seems to be a Syrian equivalent of the Babylonian Ishtar. They were, in fact, minor deities in all parts of Phœnicia except Byblos, where the cult of Ashtar, with Adonis as accessory, overshadowed all else. As is well known, the legend of Adonis and Ashtar was similar to that of Tammuz and Ishtar which we examined in the last chapter, and every year the Phœnicians celebrated, with mournful chant and music and the wailing of women, the death of the handsome young god; and on the following day the song and music rose to a joyous or boisterous height, for the god had risen again from the dead.

In his *Adonis Attis Osiris* Sir J. G. Frazer has

examined so minutely every feature of this cult that I may confine myself to a few points, and refer the reader to that work for the ample evidence. At whatever period the Babylonians and Egyptians may have mourned the death of their popular god, the Phœnicians held the festivity in the spring; and it is further certain that an image of the dead god was exhibited on such occasions. Probably few will now doubt that the natural truth on which the legend and the rite were based was the annual death of the vegetation-force or spirit, and its annual resurrection. Sir J. G. Frazer gives some evidence that Adonis may have been originally an historical character, but the rite must be older than any such deification, if it occurred. Whether it was borrowed from either Egypt or Babylonia cannot be decided by the authorities, and it is generally doubted. The annual pageant of nature seems to have made a deep and analogous impression upon a number of independent peoples of this fertile region, and as they advanced in intelligence they interpreted it to mean that the earth-goddess annually lost her lover, the spirit of vegetation, who sank for a time into the dreary underworld, leaving the earth barren and joyless.

Since this rite and legend turned entirely upon the idea of fertility, of which Adonis and Ashtar were the promoters, we are not surprised to find sexual practices associated with it. Whatever may have been the case in Babylonia, it is certain that prostitution was a part of the cult, or associated with the cult, of Ashtar. We must not, indeed,

take too readily the statements of early Christian writers. No authority on Greece would admit the charge of Epiphanius (*Adversus Hæreses*, III, 10), that "obscenities" and naked women were part of the Eleusinian mysteries; nor can we for a moment accept the extraordinary statements of Augustine (*De Hæresibus*, XLVI) about the Manichæans. Christians and Pagans were in the habit of bringing such charges recklessly against each other. There is, however, sufficient independent evidence that the temples of Ashtar were centres of sacred prostitution. It is impossible for us to trace the original idea of the practice, though few now doubt that it had in the beginning a serious religious or magical significance. We have in other parts of the world ample evidence of lowly peoples who imagine that by their sexual intercourse they magically influence the fertility of nature; while, on the other hand, the behaviour of the goddess herself would seem to sanction similar freedom in her worshippers. It is a singular fallacy to judge such matters by the ascetic code of other religions, and speak in accents of horror of the cult of Ashtar. Indeed, the humane historian may well be tempted to wonder whether the practices which accompanied that cult deserve a more severe condemnation than the ascetic illusion which doomed Vestal Virgins at Rome or the nuns of later Christianity to a pallid and joyless life and deprived the State of their motherly functions.

To us, however, the chief point of interest is that at least a thousand years before Christ there was in Palestine itself, in the spring, an annual celebration

of the death and resurrection of a popular deity. Earlier still, we saw, a similar conception spread over the Mediterranean region from Egypt and Babylonia. We shall presently see that a similar myth and annual celebration were found among the Phrygians further north, and that from these various centres the festival of the dying and rising god spread over the entire eastern region of the Mediterranean. Before the first century of our era that festival was the outstanding feature, the most popular and most cosmopolitan event of the year, in the whole Græco-Roman Empire. From Alexandria to Ephesus and Athens there was not a city of the world in which Christianity arose that was not familiar with an annual mourning over a dead god which, in the space of from one to three days, turned into wild rejoicing over his resurrection. We read in Plutarch (*Alcibiades*, XVIII) that as early as the year 415 B.C. the festival was part of the religious life of the women of Athens; and from Greece it passed to Italy in the third century before Christ. We will, however, consider in the next chapter the relation of the Christian legend to that of Attis, Adonis, and Osiris.

In his learned work, *Adonis und Esmun* (1911), Count Baudissin endeavours to show that the Phœnician god Esmun, the deity of vital force and healing, is a duplication or later version of Adonis. Esmun was chiefly worshipped at Sidon and Carthage (a Phœnician colony). He is sometimes described as a beautiful young man, beloved of a goddess, who died in youth, and was raised to



life by his divine lover. There is in this a faint resemblance to the legend of Adonis, but Esmun assumes an ethical character. He was the god of healing, which to the orientals was a "rise from the dead"; and many of the surviving Phœnician names suggest that he came to be regarded as a dispenser of "grace" and "help." Count Baudissin believes that this "living god" and healer of the sick was evolved from the naturalistic Adonis, and that he in turn had a very considerable influence on the ethical evolution of the Hebrew Jahveh.

Contemporary with the Phœnician civilization was the kingdom of the Hittites, to the north and north-east of Palestine; but none has yet succeeded in deciphering the inscriptions we find among its ruins, and our knowledge of its religion is too slender to be of use here. Sir J. G. Frazer describes and speculates upon some of the surviving Hittite sculptures, and finds traces of a sky and thunder-god, a mother-goddess of fertility (earth), and a third and younger deity who may correspond to Adonis.

To the west of the Hittites, in Asia Minor, was the kingdom of the Phrygians, where the myth of a dying and rising god assumed one of its most popular forms; to the west of the Phrygians were the Lydians, with a similar cult, bringing it almost to the gates of Europe. Indeed, our authorities consider that the Phrygians and Lydians were of European origin. They had, about a thousand years before Christ, left some region in the neighbourhood of Thrace, and settled in Asia Minor. But it is generally agreed that they borrowed from the natives



of their adopted land the feature of their religious life which alone need concern us here: the cult of a great mother-goddess and of an annually slain god. Whether these natives had received it from the Phœnicians or had separately developed it cannot be determined.

The fundamental element of the religion was the worship of a great nameless mother-goddess whom the Greeks called Cybele and the Romans "the mother of the gods." It is probable that the original natives were of the "mother-kin" group, or traced descent on the maternal side: a primitive practice which tends to give more prominence to the female in religion as in other matters. The invading Phrygians may have imposed their male gods, but the cult of the mother-earth goddess retained its popularity, and a priestess was the chief minister in the annual rite. Generally, however, a male priesthood served the temples, and, as if out of respect for the feminism of the earlier days, these men castrated themselves. The eunuch priests were familiar all over the east. They wore female dress, perfumed their hair, and danced to the music of flutes, cymbals, and castanets.

The myth or legend, as we have it, is late, and one suspects that it is in part invented to cover the self-mutilation of the priests, and partly a familiar attempt to adjust or relate a male deity to a popular goddess who could not be suppressed. The influence of the Phœnician or the Babylonian legend can hardly be doubted. Probably the original institution was merely a cult of mother-earth, who was herself

regarded as the deity of fecundity; and this would not unnaturally lead to sacred prostitution. Sir W. Ramsay says that "there is no direct evidence that this was practised in the worship of Cybele"; but there is much to suggest it. Ramsay, a Christian writer, is generous enough to point out that these practices would have in the beginning a serious intention, and may have gradually drifted into mere loose practice. In any case, as I said, one wonders how it is that so many writers cannot mention without a shudder these scenes of the Asiatic temples, yet hardly notice the appalling blight of life which Christian asceticism caused by running into the opposite and more cruel extreme; to say nothing of the religious wars, executions and massacres of heretics and Jews, and general repression of life and thought.

To this cult of an ancient mother-goddess was added in the course of time the cult of her son and lover, Attis. The legend exists in numbers of forms. At times it is as far removed as possible from the Christian legend, except in the single respect that Attis was annually honoured with a commemoration of his death and resurrection. In other forms the legend approaches the legend of Christ, and in the artistic dress which Greek art gave to the myth the statue of Cybele, stricken with grief, holding on her knees the dead body of her divine son, has so close a resemblance to medieval statues of Mary and the dead Christ that there is strong ground to regard the latter as copied from the former.

The Phrygian legend, as told by the Greeks (and therefore late), is that Zeus, in sleep, poured his seed upon the earth, and from it arose a hermaproditic being. The gods castrated this being, and an almond tree grew from his testicles. The goddess conceived Attis by eating almonds of this tree, but the beautiful youth went mad and, under the shade of a pine, castrated himself and caused his death. Cybele—who, in some forms of the legend, is the lover of her son—bore the body to a cave and surrendered herself to wild laments; and Zeus, taking pity on her, decreed that the body of Attis should remain incorruptible. In another form of the legend Attis is an historical character, a youth who fell in love with Cybele, daughter of the Phrygian king. They were both put to death by the king, but so great a disaster fell upon the kingdom that they were raised to the rank of gods and annually mourned.

It is, however, not the constantly changing forms of the legend which chiefly interest us. Probably the central idea is an allegorical representation of the fact that mother-earth is annually saddened by the cutting-off or slaying of her fruits. The festival is well known to us, since it was popular at Rome in the imperial period, and we may presume that it differed little from the Phrygian model. It lasted twelve days, and covered the date of the vernal equinox. On March 15 there was a reed-bearing procession in memory of the finding of the body of Attis by the reedy margin of a river. It may be recalled that the Christian celebration, about the

same season, of the death and resurrection of Christ begins also with a reed-bearing or palm-bearing procession (on Palm Sunday), and that in the case of both religious abstinence was enjoined. On March 22 was the procession of the sacred pine, recalling the self-mutilation of Attis under a pine tree. The tree was swathed with wool and decorated with violets, as the violet was believed to have sprung from the blood of the god. March 24 was "the Day of Blood"—a day of stern asceticism and ritual mourning. On that day (corresponding to Good Friday) the sombre ceremony in the Phrygian temples ended in a frenzy of music and dance, at the close of which the new priests—and at times some of the worshippers—grasped the sword and castrated themselves. But on the morrow the dreary chants and dramatic laments suddenly changed, as the ritual of the Catholic Church changes on the morning after Good Friday—not waiting until Easter morn, as is generally believed—into a wild rejoicing. Attis was risen, and the joyous note of the ritual was more than reflected in the general gaiety. The long festivity ended on March 27, when the image of Cybele was borne ceremoniously to the river to be washed, and the neophytes were, it seems, baptized in the blood of a ram.

It would be impossible here to attempt to interpret the symbolism of this long and complex ceremony, and I must be content to remind the reader of its significance in connection with later religious development. As early as the fifth century before Christ this elaborate spring celebration of the death

and resurrection of a god was familiar in every city of the eastern Mediterranean, from Alexandria to Corinth. It had not a prominent position in Rome until after the founding of Christianity, though it was one of the most popular religious festivals of the Romans at a time when a mere handful of Christians gathered in their secluded chapels. But Christianity was not born at Rome; whatever the historical nucleus it may contain, it was shaped and developed precisely in those cities, from Alexandria to Corinth, where the dramatic ritual of Attis and Cybele had been prominent for centuries. Ephesus, the first city to demand the worship of Mary, had been one of the most ardent centres of the cult of Cybele, whose sad image, bearing a dead god on her knees, was familiar to every child. What inference we may deduce from this we will consider in the next chapter.

Let us retrace our steps to the east and consider two other religions of equal interest in connection with the evolution of European religion. The Persians, or Iranians, are, we saw, a branch of a joint Hindu-Persian family, which seems to have broken up in the second millennium before Christ, and there is considerable resemblance between the primitive religions of the two races. We have the usual difficulty of tracing the original complexion of the Persian religion, but diligent and discriminating study of the Persian sacred book, the *Avesta*, joined with the statements of Greek writers, has yielded as much knowledge as we require here. It is the later development which chiefly interests us.

The earliest phase of religion, the cult of the dead, lingered among the Persians as vividly as we found it among the Egyptians. While Babylonians, Phœnicians, Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans regarded the underworld as a grey, misty region, in which they could descry little more than the bare existence of the thin shades of the dead, the Persians, like the Egyptians, had a lively belief in immortality and in the need to render after death a moral account of one's conduct. This is forgotten by writers who see some peculiar significance in the explicit doctrine of a future life of the early Christians. The Hebrews, Greeks, and Romans were not the only peoples whose culture they inherited. And just as the Persians believed vividly in survival, so they retained the old cult of ancestors and of minor spirits in nature. We read in the Avesta:—

I desire to approach with my praise those Fravashis [spirits] which have existed from of old, the Fravashis of the houses and of the villages, of the communes and of the provinces, which hold the heavens in its place apart, and the water, land, and cattle, which hold the children in the wombs safely enclosed apart so that they do not miscarry.<sup>1</sup>

These spirits, we must remember, become the angels and devils of higher religions, and at a quite early date in Persian religion we find them separated into those hostile armies of good and bad spirits.

<sup>1</sup> Yasna xxiii (*Sacred Books of the East*, vol. xxxi, p. 272).

But the primitive Persian religion had also its nature-worship, akin to that of the early Hindus. Chief among the gods was Mithra, the sky-god, who seems to have evolved from a mere indwelling spirit of the firmament to a celestial moral ruler. His last phase we will consider later. With him was associated, in the early days, the customary earth-goddess; and there were deities of fire, water, winds, lightning, sun, and moon. As among the Hindus, a certain intoxicating drink, the Haoma (Hindu Soma), was deified; and when the religion developed a moral character, as it soon did, abstractions like "Faith," "Righteousness," and so on, were deified. There were in addition certain semi-divine or heroic spirits, possibly ancestral, possibly at first local nature spirits, which were called Asura or Ahura; and there is evidence that at a very early date one of these Ahura had the epithet Mazda, or "the Wise."

The great reform of the Persian religion which is associated with the name of Zarathustra (or Zoroaster) consisted in elevating this Ahura Mazda to the supreme position, investing him with the most exalted ethical attributes, and endeavouring to suppress the old nature-worship and popular mixture of magic and superstition. It is, of course, a familiar phase of religious evolution. We have seen it in Babylon and Egypt, India and China, even Mexico and Peru. In Persia this stage seems to have been reached about a thousand years before Christ, and it is particularly expressed in the part of the Avesta known as the Gathas.



We should not expect to find among a people not long emerged from barbarism so complete an aversion from religion as we found in the case of Kung-tse and Buddha, but the reform of Zarathustra was remarkably advanced. It is, in effect, monotheistic, for the six "Immortal Beneficents" who are associated with Ahura Mazda were created by him, and are little more than archangels or personified virtues. They bear such names as "Good Thoughts," "Immortality," and so on. Mithra and the older gods, whom Zarathustra could not extinguish, were turned into ministers of Ahura Mazda; but in the pure Gathas they are not mentioned, and sacrifices to such gods are expressly condemned. In effect, Zarathustra's religion is an ethical monotheism of the highest type.

In one respect, however, Zarathustra's monotheism was singular. He admitted a supreme evil spirit, Angra Mainyu, who had existed from the beginning. This does not seem to deprive the religion of a monotheistic character, for Angra Mainyu is neither eternal nor all-powerful. He will eventually be destroyed or imprisoned under the earth by Ahura Mazda. His name, indeed, which means "Enemy Spirit," may be merely a personification of all the evil influences which struggle against the divine will. In any case, this dualism arose from the fact that Zarathustra resolutely faced the problem of evil, which theologians generally evade. There were, he said, two supreme spirits, each with his great ministers and armies of angels or demons. The world was a battleground, and man must pick



his steps warily. His gravest concern must be to keep pure and righteous, and resist the temptations of evil spirits. Zarathustra himself is described as having experienced a severe temptation by the devil before he began his career of reform.

This is interesting enough in a religion which preceded Christ by a thousand years, but the further teaching of Zarathustra is even more instructive. The soul of man, or the immortal part of his complex spiritual nature, hovers near the body for a few days, and then it goes to be judged by the minor deities. If the record of its deeds proves satisfactory, it passes to the presence of Ahura Mazda to enjoy a blessed eternity. The evil go to a place of darkness; and there is a third place for those whose good and evil deeds hang equally in the scale. But an eternal struggle of this description was felt by Zarathustra to be inconsistent with the supremacy of his good principle. He taught, therefore, that in the fullness of time Ahura Mazda would destroy or enslave Angra Mainyu and hold a general judgment of the souls of men. A star would fall upon the earth and melt all its metals. The dead would rise again, and the souls of all men would pass through the flood of fire. In this the wicked would suffer, but presently the souls of *all* men would be gathered in a place of bliss, and the powers of evil would be silenced for ever. This final state the Persian writers call "the Kingdom"; and on almost every page of the Gathas we find the Zarathustrian yearning for the "Kingdom" which is to come.

Here we have many conspicuous elements of the

Christian theology and eschatology centuries before the birth of Christ; but we have still to consider a remarkable development of the Persian religion. After the death of Zarathustra a reaction restored the old nature religion, at a higher level, though the subsequent books of the Avesta always pay high tribute to the prophet. Mithra now became the popular deity, but the old sky-god was transformed by new influences into a being singularly analogous to Christ. Under Babylonian influence Mithra became a definite sun-god, and under Zarathustrian influence he assumed an intensely ethical character and a peculiar position in regard to Ahura Mazda. He was, so to say, rejuvenated. He became the shining champion of man in the great struggle, the symbol of all the forces of light, the "mediator" between man and Ahura Mazda, the redeemer and saviour.

Legend and rite developed richly in the new cult. Mithra, the legend said, had been born of a rock, and only the lowly shepherds had witnessed and paid homage at his birth.<sup>1</sup> The myth may be an allegory of the issue of light from the solid vault of heaven. Mithra wandered about the earth in human form, experiencing many trials and triumphs, and in the end, after a last supper with his disciples, he ascended into heaven. The ritual followed the legend. On December 25, which was considered the first day of the re-ascent of the sun, his birth from a rock was scenically represented in the

<sup>1</sup> For full details see F. Cumont's *Mysteries of Mithra* (1903) and *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (1906).

temples. The temples were known as "caves," and their dark interior was lit by innumerable candles and filled with the odour of incense. At an altar in the apse at the end of the temple the priests celebrated a supper, or holy meal of bread and wine (substituted for the ancient *haoma*), in commemoration of Mithra's last supper; and there were frequent purifications with water and baptisms by blood.

The early Christian writers tell us of many absurd doctrines and practices of the Mithraists, and we know that their religion did contract many such absurdities. Babylonian influence loaded it with astral puerilities, and as it moved slowly across Asia Minor and Greece it contracted further stains. It seems to have been on account of this perversion of the religion in its popular form that its leaders formed an inner circle of "the elect," to whom the pure faith was revealed. At their initiation they took an oath or "sacrament" (*sacramentum*, or oath of military loyalty), and were "signed" or branded on the forehead. There were various degrees of initiation, and there seem to have been such foolish "trials" and masquerades as are said to be practised by certain Freemasons. But the stern ethical code of the faith is now questioned by none, and the resemblance of its ceremonies to those of Christianity gave concern to more than one Christian writer in the days when the borrowing had been forgotten or concealed. There was a close resemblance, too, in the fact that all the initiates of Mithraism, whether they were slaves or soldiers or

nobles, were "brothers," or sons of a common father.

Mithraism flowed westward with the general stream of culture. It crossed Asia Minor, receiving some taint from the identification of Mithra with Attis or Adonis. It crossed Greece, where Mithra was hailed as a Persian version of Helios, Apollo, or Hermes. It reached Rome in the first century before Christ. By that time the old Roman religion was in decay, and large numbers of men and women sought in Greek and Asiatic religions a satisfaction of that disturbed sentiment in their minds which they called their religious instinct. Some found this satisfaction in the chaste and mild Egyptian cult of Isis and Serapis; some in the picturesque legend and thrilling ritual of Attis and Cybele. Mithraism, with its stern Persian call to battle, appealed principally to soldiers, and about the end of the first century of the present era it began to spread, through them, over the wide empire. Slaves also were attracted by its promise of immediate brotherhood and future redemption. It was, says Cumont, "originally and essentially a religion of the lowly." But the earnest of all classes turned to it, and its priests affected to adapt it to the "science" and philosophy of the time. It had a chapel in the imperial palace, and in 270 the Emperor Aurelian gave it the official position of a recognized Roman cult.

By that time a new Asiatic religion, Christianity, sought proselytes at Rome, and the two cults entered upon what Cumont, our chief authority, calls "a

ferocious and implacable duel." The nearer they approached each other in ethic, rite, and teaching, the more violent were the epithets they cast upon each other. There is good reason to think that Mithraism spread more rapidly than its rival. It had several temples at Rome before the Christians had a single chapel, and its position as a recognized cult, not unfriendly to the Roman system, would naturally give it a larger following. How Christianity eventually supplanted and suppressed its formidable rival we shall see in the next chapter.

Meantime another embodiment of Persian moral idealism had reached Rome, and it gave the Christians hardly less concern than Mithraism. Manichæism, which claims so large a share of the controversial zeal of St. Augustine, need not be considered closely here. It is admittedly a sort of Gnostic mixture of Persian and Jewish tenets, a translation into Jewish or eclectic language of the old Persian dualism. It originated in Babylonia more than two hundred years after the death of Christ, and it followed the march of religions towards the West. Its central idea was the old Persian dualism of light and darkness. Man's duty was by fasting and chastity to free the light-element in him from the dominion of matter (the body), which Satan had created. The sect was therefore rigorously ascetic, and must be held innocent of the gross charges St. Augustine and St. Leo make against it. St. Jerome, on the contrary, says that, if he meets in Christian Rome a woman of austere and grave look, he knows at once that she is a Manichæan. It was, after Mithraism, the strongest

rival of Christianity in the Rome of the fourth century.

In fine, we must notice the religion of the Hebrews as a contributing element, though the story of its development is now so well known that a very slight sketch will suffice here. It is often said that the Old Testament is invaluable as a document illustrating the evolution of a religion. This new defence of the prestige of the Old Testament is apt to mislead. The Jewish books are certainly the most remarkable illustration known to us of the deliberate falsification of religious history by priests; but the very range and thoroughness of this falsification make it more difficult for us to retrace the natural development than in the case of the Chinese, Hindu, or Persian sacred books.

Who Jahveh was originally, what the name precisely means, and how he came to displace the other gods of this particular branch of the Semites, we cannot confidently say. It is doubtful where the Hebrews came from, and whether they ever approached even the borders of Egypt. The story recorded in the Old Testament is so late and legendary that we cannot be sure of anything until we find the Hebrews settled in two small kingdoms in Palestine. Even the zeal of the later priestly writers has not succeeded in entirely concealing the fact that they were a generally polytheistic people, with a band of priests and dervish-like prophets endeavouring to secure a monopoly of worship for Jahveh. We have already seen so many instances of a priesthood suppressing its rivals and their gods

that the establishment among the Jews of an official monotheism, with much unofficial polytheism, does not surprise us. Jahveh was, however, at this stage—until the seventh century B.C.—merely a deified Bedouin chief, ferocious and vindictive, sharing the low standard of morals of his people.

But the world was already far advanced in civilization, and the Hebrews could not any more than the primitive Greeks remain long blind to the higher ideals of the greater peoples with whom they came in contact. Phœnicia had developed the cult of Esmun, the living and life-giving god; and we saw that Count Baudissin traces a large ethical influence from this side on the conception of Jahveh. The ideals of Egypt and Babylonia also spread over Syria. The lofty religion of Zarathustra was by this time several centuries old, and would not be confined to Persia. Judæa was well placed for receiving stimulation from every side. There was, moreover, a considerable source of development in its economic condition. Its little "civilization" followed the usual model, and it soon had a small class living in luxury and a large body of poor. The priests, as usual, sided with the rich; and the popular spokesmen or demagogues, the prophets, just as naturally discovered that Jahveh was a god of strict justice, the protector of the widow and orphan and oppressed, a foundation of mercy and righteousness. It is the familiar struggle of the "haves" and "have-nots" that is reflected in the morality of the early prophets and psalm writers.

The Babylonian captivity, in the sixth century,



made the Jews fully acquainted with the ideals of an advanced civilization; and as the Old Testament, in its present form, was written after that date, we understand its relative advance in ethical idealism. Persian influence was next exerted upon the Jews, and we find the old Semitic indifference about a future life changing, and angels and devils entering the theology. The natural hope that Jahveh would some day raise a national hero, an "anointed one" (or Messiah), to deliver his people in a material sense now began to assume a figurative complexion. Priests and prophets had so long foretold political redemption, and so often failed to produce it, that the spiritual theory of redemption was convenient and more adapted to the facts. In the fourth century the Greeks overran Judæa, and a new ethical strain was introduced into the Jewish mind. Culture and scepticism and humanitarianism grew on the one hand; a stern reactionary zeal for the old ideals hardened on the other.

By the first century of the old era Judæa was a synthesis of the religious and ethical culture of that stirring time, as I have already described it. Jews travelled all over the Græco-Roman world, and became familiar with every form of legend and rite and ethic. At the time when the present era opens every variety of religious belief was represented. Even Buddhist missionaries from India had reached Judæa. Among the Rabbis the school of Shammai clung to the rigorous observance of the law, while the school of Hillel pleaded for a mild interpretation of it in accordance with the enlightenment of the



time. Beyond these was a sect, the Essenes, who united a humanitarian scorn of the old sacrificial religion and the temple with the new asceticism of Persia and Egypt. They avoided sexual intercourse and flesh, held property in common, advocated complete equality, never took oaths, and laboured for the enlightenment of the people and the healing of the sick. At this point Jesus of Nazareth appeared, and the course of religious evolution entered upon a new phase.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE STORY OF CHRISTIANITY.

THAT the Christian religion is a natural development, one of the higher branches of the tree whose growth from a primitive germ we have traced, is now so freely admitted by scholarly theologians that the point need not be laboured here. Three centuries of fierce attack upon Deists, Unitarians, and Agnostics have ended in surrender. The New Testament no more contains a revelation than the Old Testament, the Vedas, or the Gathas. The stream of religious evolution flows evenly from the last century of the old era to the first century of the new. Christianity is one of the new religions which issue from that cosmopolitan ferment which I have described.

At the most it may be contended—outside of uncultivated or Roman Catholic circles—that the moral genius of Christ was so singular that he contributed to the broadening stream of religious tradition something akin to a revelation. In my *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels* (1914) I have exhaustively analysed, line by line, the moral sentiments which the Gospel writers have put into the mouth of Christ, and I have shown the vainness of this contention. Not only is there evidence that some of the most admired of those sentiments were never uttered by Christ, but I have given a parallel to each sentiment from Hebrew, Greek, and Roman

moralists.) The compilation might be extended to Chinese, Hindu, Persian, Babylonian, and Egyptian moralists. The Christian literature expresses a phase of moral development through which each of the old civilizations passed, and the Christian writers had the advantage of living in an age and an environment in which the traditions of ten civilizations and religions were pooled. In such circumstances we should, on evolutionary principles, expect an advance. But, as I showed, this hope is to some extent disappointed, because Christ and the early Christians expected a speedy end of the world, and the code of life which they compiled is correspondingly ascetic and individualistic. In this it coincided with, and did not surpass, Mithraism and Manichæism, or the religions of Isis and Serapis. It fell far short of Stoicism in sane social idealism.

On the purely religious or doctrinal side it would be just as easy to find a parallel to every point in the Gospels. That task would, however, require a separate publication, and it will be more useful here to sketch the actual growth of the new religion. I can do little more than state conclusions, and relate them to such evidence as is given in the preceding chapters.

That the new religion originated in an historical character still seems to me the more probable theory, though many have in recent years called into question the historicity of Christ. That question it would be hopeless to discuss here. But since the Gospels as we know them cannot be shown to have existed before at least the third decade of the second century,

or about a hundred years after the death of Christ ; since the evidence on which theologians place earlier and shorter versions of them in the seventh or eighth decade of the first century is flimsy and strained ; and since even forty years would suffice in an oriental atmosphere to add any quantity of imaginative detail to the story of a religious hero, we have no confident knowledge of the personality and teaching of Christ. On general historical analogy, and on the strength of the attitude of the early Hebrew Rabbis towards the new religion, I conclude, diffidently, that Christ was a Galilean artizan who set out to reform the religion of his land ; and I think it highly probable that Christ spent some years in an Essene monastery before he became a preacher of a purer religion.

If we further accept the version of Christ's message which theologians now dissect out of the late tissue of the Synoptic Gospels, we have still a quite natural and common development. That God is a pure spirit, not to be worshipped by animal sacrifices or the ritual of the temple ; that he finds bread for all, so that none should heap up riches ; that mercy and charity and brotherhood are better than prayers and fasts ; that he who would be perfect ought to live in poverty and chastity, and never take oaths ; that there are legions of devils and angels—these things were known to every Jew as doctrines which the Essenes had taught for many generations. Indeed, apart from the asceticism, these religious ideas are found in all the earlier religions ; and the asceticism itself is present in many. In the case of Christ the asceticism is

coloured by a positive, and entirely wrong, belief that the end of the world and the judgment of all men are close at hand. We saw that this idea of a coming "kingdom" had been familiar in Persia for ages. Christ merely makes it an impending event—less wisely than the Persians—and it is not very audacious to surmise that if we had a larger knowledge of the Essenes we would find that their asceticism was based on the same expectation. In any case, the illusion will scarcely be regarded as miraculous.

At all events, there is nothing in really primitive Christianity that requires explanation. The doctrinal element of Christ's teaching is as slender as it is familiar in other religions or philosophies. We do not even need to look outside Judæa for its possible sources. Jesus was one of a hundred enthusiasts who tried to rid religion of the incrustations of ritual and priestcraft. He may have been put to death for his revolt, the language imputed to him being at times blasphemous from the Jewish point of view. The early Rabbis do not seem to have denied this.

This is, however, not Christianity; though we cannot confidently trace anything more than this in the first century. It is of the first importance that we should realize that nothing more can be traced earlier than the year 70. In that year the hand of Rome fell so heavily on the Jewish people that whatever gospels were written after that date were assuredly not written in Palestine. We must, therefore, seek their origin in Alexandria, Antioch, Tarsus, Ephesus, or even the Greek cities;

and we have already seen that all these cities were hives of cosmopolitan religion, ethic, and mythology. In each city a hundred temples, in which shaven or silk-clad priests moved amid the blaze of tapers and clouds of incense, invited men to worship some half-human deity, born of a virgin (as a rule), who would help them: Osiris, Serapis, Horus, Adonis, Attis, Dionysus, Zagreus, or Mithra. In every city were myriads of beautiful Greek statues of a virgin-mother (Isis, Persephone, Semele, etc.) holding in her arms a divine babe, or supporting on her lap a dead god who will rise again.

Many might be added to the legends I have given. In Crete men worshipped the babe Zagreus, born of Zeus and Persephone, torn by Titans, and then re-born miraculously of the virgin Semele. In Mysia we find an inscription which hails Kore (daughter of Demeter) as "the Holy Virgin of our Fatherland." In Alexandria, besides the celebrations at the winter-solstice of the miraculous birth of Horus and of Mithra, there was a service in the temple of Kore on the night of January 5-6. The worshippers sang hymns until dawn, when they descended to an underground shrine and brought out a wooden image of Kore, naked, on a bier, signed with a cross. This they carried seven times joyously round the temple; "and the votaries," Epiphanius tells us, "say that to-day at this hour Kore—that is, the Virgin—gave birth to the Eternal."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I take this and the preceding from Dr. Farnell's *Evolution of Religion* (p. 35). He thinks this a partly Christianized version of

In brief, the cities in which the Gospels must have been slowly compiled, one version succeeding another, as "Luke" intimates (i, 1), were saturated with legends of the miraculous birth and resurrection of gods. A god was hardly worthy of the name who had been born in the ordinary way, or had died in the ordinary way. Any person who can believe that this world which was saturated with such myths, and adorned with myriads of statues and pageants representing them, suddenly *did*, by a most extraordinary coincidence, become the theatre of a real miraculous birth and resurrection must have a remarkable faculty of belief. In point of fact, none of the backward Christians of our time who still profess literal belief in the virgin-birth and resurrection of Christ have any idea of the extent to which these legends filled the mind of the time; and they are equally ignorant that the birth and resurrection myths cannot be proved to have existed in any gospel until well into the second century. Whether the matter be judged by common sense or by scholarship, the first great additions to primitive Christianity, the miraculous opening and miraculous close of the life of Christ, are tawdry decorations stolen from the Pagan temples of the time.

No doubt the healing and other miracles had already found a place in the growing record, but on

an old "kind of passion-play [in the cult of Kore] in which a holy child was born." As he gives the wrong reference to Epiphanius, I cannot control it, and cannot find the passage in *De Haeresibus*. But the cross was an Egyptian symbol as well as Christian, and Dr. Farnell observes that Epiphanius describes this as a purely Pagan mystery.

these I need not dwell, as so few Christian scholars now admit them. They are the common embroidery of the lives of ancient religious heroes, and the record is too late to demand serious attention. So it is with the wonderful features which are added to the borrowed legend of a miraculous life. The birth in a stable and the presence of shepherds seem to have been borrowed from Mithraism. The star is a common enough phenomenon. The temptation in the desert is plainly borrowed from the Persian Avesta, which describes the evil spirit offering to make Zarathustra, in exactly similar circumstances, "ruler of the nations" if he will quit the service of Ahura Mazda.<sup>1</sup> The last supper and ascent into heaven are Mithraic. It must not, of course, be supposed that the Gospels are a mere mosaic of borrowed fragments. The oriental imagination was not so poor as that, as the Apocryphal Gospels richly show. But the chief additions to the simple primitive life of the Galilean reformer were taken from the popular beliefs of the time.

Meantime the Church itself was evolving. The Mithraic "last supper" must have been borrowed early, and it became the starting-point of a cult. The bread and wine got, as in Mithraism, a mystic significance, and the server-priest (or elder) and deacon (or assistant) formed the nucleus of a hierarchy. "Overseers" (bishops) of a group of communities appear also to have been appointed early. Probably before the end of the first century

<sup>1</sup> *Sacred Books of the East*, IV, 211.



Christ's simple idea of a priest-less worship of God by the individual was lost under a new hierarchy. His equally simple conception of a religion, or relation of man to God, without theology was also very soon submerged in a frothing sea of speculation. Christianity split into a large number of schools or sects, generally classed together as Gnostics, who fiercely disputed points of doctrine; and the less speculative or more "orthodox" were naturally led to define their idea of Christ and his relation to God more firmly.

We cannot follow this luxurious growth of speculation very clearly, but out of it there soon arose the central idea of the second phase of Christianity: its nearest approach to a distinctive doctrine. The gods of rival religions had died for various reasons, and had conferred on man diverse benefits by their deaths. The special merit of Christ was decided by the Hebrew legend (to which we find parallels in many primitive religions) that God had laid a curse upon the first human pair and their descendants. The task of Christ, when he had been deified, was plain. By *his* death he had appeased "the wrath of the Father" and redeemed men from the curse. To this the long Jewish expectation of a Deliverer easily led. There is an approach to it in the conception of Mithra as "redeemer"; and the term "Saviour" had long been applied to Zeus. In the Eleusinian mysteries also the re-appearance (or resurrection) of Persephone was regarded as at once a symbol and promise of happy immortality.

With this legend, and its primitive clergy and

commemoration-supper, Christianity became a cult, though it was still simple. It paid no honour to Mary or saints, had no images or incense, and no great festivals. Clement of Alexandria, the most learned of the Greek Christians in the early part of the third century, says (*Stromateis*, I, 11) that there was in his time no fixed festival in honour of the birth of Christ. He makes it clear that the date and year of Christ's birth were quite unknown, and he is tolerably indifferent about the fact. Throughout the third century the Christians, surrounded on all sides by Pagans celebrating the miraculous birth of gods, shrank from such a celebration. Then some began to celebrate, while others opposed, the spiritual birth (or baptism) of Christ. The date varied from January to May. Rome, however, was not so scrupulous in borrowing, and about the middle of the fourth century the Roman Church fixed the celebration of the Nativity on December 25. This day was known throughout the Roman world, and was marked in the official Roman calendar, as "the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun," Mithra. The eastern Churches long resisted, some preferring January 6 (the birthday, as we saw, of Kore's divine son), which the Armenian Church retains to this day. But Christianity was now displacing Paganism by imperial authority, and it had to appease the Pagans by adopting their festivals. It borrowed also Sunday, the Sun's Day, or day sacred to Apollo and Mithra.

Easter was earlier celebrated in the Church, as a date for it was suggested in the Gospels. We

have seen that this period was the date of the oldest and most common religious festivals in the world, and of the death and resurrection of Attis in particular. The calendar was gradually compiled by the same process of putting a new face on old celebrations. January 6, the rival Pagan birthday, became the "Epiphany." The Februalia of the Romans, a time of energetic lustrations and purifications, gave place to "the Purification of Mary," or Candlemas Day; which also absorbs an Egyptian festival in honour of Nut, when candles were used in large numbers in the Egyptian temples. A very high proportion of the feasts of the Christian calendar merely displace Pagan festivals.

Here, however, we advance too quickly, for the compilation of the Christian calendar out of Pagan festivals proceeded well into the Middle Ages. We must return and study the evolving Church of the third and fourth centuries. On the doctrinal side the evolution is well known, but we cannot attempt to follow it here. Atonement was, as I said, the first and most nearly distinctive doctrine, and is very plainly taught in the Epistles of Paul; though its distinction lies solely in its peculiar combination of the old Hebrew legend of a primitive curse and the current Mithraic yearning for "redemption" from sin. "Have mercy on us" is a Mithraic formula which Christianity adopted. The next doctrine was Incarnation, which emerged at last from the long struggle with, and final victory over, the Gnostics. In the third and fourth centuries a similar, but far more truculent and bloody, struggle

in the eastern Church ended in the fixing of the dogma of the Trinity. This is all that we need notice, for the further definition of doctrine, especially as it is presented by the Church of Rome, belongs to the Middle Ages.

Out of the struggle about the Incarnation and Trinity, however, there issued in the fourth century the cult of Mary, which brought the Christian Church much nearer to "Paganism," and gave it a great advantage over Mithraism. For nearly four hundred years the Church almost ignored the mother of Christ. On the one hand, three of the four gospels represented Christ as on bad terms with his mother and brothers; on the other hand, the very popularity of virgin-mothers among the Pagans made the early Christians shrink from imitation. In the fourth century, however, the relation of the Church to Paganism was entirely changed. Christianity became a State religion, then the sole authorized religion, and all other cults were drastically suppressed. The Pagans clung fiercely to, and fought for, their picturesque rites and legends, and the austere attitude of the earlier Church was abandoned. Why not, since there was "a germ of truth" in these Pagan rites and doctrines, assimilate and transform them, and thus more easily win their worshippers? The real meaning of the "germ of truth" was already lost. The Christians of the third and fourth centuries would have been astounded if one had told them that *their* miraculous birth and resurrection had been borrowed from the Pagans.

The East, which had resented the Roman adoption of Mithra's birthday, now took the lead in establishing the cult of Mary. Ephesus, for centuries a famous centre of the cult of Cybele, seems to have been the most forward and zealous in promoting a cult of Mary. It was the Council of Ephesus, in 431, that paid her the first official honours. Austere leaders like St. Augustine had frowned on such cults; but, as the stirring old pageants in honour of virgin-mothers were now everywhere suppressed by law, the new cult of a virgin-mother was enthusiastically acclaimed by the semi-Pagan multitudes. Mary was rapidly decked in all the paraphernalia of her dead predecessors. From Ashtar she borrowed the title of "Queen of Heaven" (cf. *Jeremiah*, vii, 18); from Kore that of "the Holy Virgin"; and other epithets she stole from Isis, Nut, Cybele, Artemis, etc. The old statues of Isis or Kore with a divine babe, or Cybele or Ashtar sadly nursing the dead god, were copied or restored and declared to be statues of Mary. An entire liturgy in her honour could be composed out of fragments of the liturgies of Nut, Isis, Ishtar, Ashtar, Cybele, Kore, Artemis, Demeter, Juno, Tanit, and Semele. The Queen was dead: long live the Queen. A few "heretics" demurred, but they were suppressed.

Simultaneously the ritual honours of the dead gods were transferred to Christ and the saints. Here again a volume would be required to describe what traces we recover of the process; and the tenderness which most of our authorities evince in such matters has hitherto defrauded us of this

interesting volume.<sup>1</sup> It would be very difficult to describe in detail the evolution of the austere early Christian cult into the ritual Church of the fifth and later centuries, but the general situation is clear. Almost every element which was in that period added to the simple meetings of the early Christians pre-existed in the Pagan temples. Candles and incense and flowers and lustral (holy) water were universally employed in the ritual of the older religions. Baptism, either by blood or water or both, was almost equally general. Confession of sins was a part of the Babylonian liturgy, the "mysteries," and probably of the Mithraic discipline. Consecration of clergy was universal; while the shaving of the head was a custom of the priests of Isis, and the dressing in silk and fine linen was general. Relics were very widely preserved and venerated. Services over the dead were daily occurrences among the Persians and Egyptians; and a general Day of the Dead (All Souls' Day) was a prominent date in the Roman calendar, and is (as we have seen) one of the oldest elements of religion. As to saints and martyrs, they were, as I have shown in *The Popes and their Church* (1918), manufactured or borrowed from Paganism by the hundred, and substituted for the treasured figures of the Pagan creeds.

<sup>1</sup> T. Trede's *Das Heidenthum in der römischen Kirche* (1889, 4 vols.) contains a good deal of curious material. Much may also be learned from G. F. Legge's *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity* (1916, 2 vols.), L. R. Farnell's *Evolution of Religion* (1905), E. Daansen's *Mythes et Légendes* (1913), and Lanciani's *Pagan and Christian Rome* (1892).

This decking of the bare primitive Christian service with the gay robes of Paganism covered several centuries, but it proceeded much more rapidly when the Church suppressed its rivals and had to woo and win their votaries. This is the second great point on which history has for ages followed a mendacious tradition, and the historians of our time show little eagerness to correct it.<sup>1</sup> Here I can do no more than collect a few facts which I have given in various works.

It is calculated by some recent Christian authorities that by the beginning of the fourth century the Christian Church had won two and a half per cent. of the Roman Empire, or 2,500,000 out of a population of 100,000,000. I have at various times shown that this estimate is excessive, and it will be enough here to study the position in the city of Rome. We know the number of the clergy of the Roman Church about the year 250, and we may conclude from this that it had, at the most, about 20,000 worshippers. After that date the storm of the Dioclesian persecution fell upon the Church, and we know that it drove large numbers back to the Pagan altars. It is probable that at the beginning of the fourth century, after 250 years of proselytism, only a few thousand out of the

<sup>1</sup> Much of the material for a true presentation of the triumph of Christianity will be found in A. Beugnot's *Histoire de la destruction du paganisme* (1835), G. Boissier's *La fin du paganisme* (1891), H. G. Tzschirner's *Der Fall des Heidenthums* (1829), and V. Schultze's *Geschichte des Untergangs des Heidenthums* (1887). I know no English work that tells the truth, and even the above are not candid enough and are generally Christian. Gibbon's account is inadequate,



million citizens of Rome were Christians. In Italy and the West generally the proportion was no higher; and as the East had shared the persecution, its masses of ignorant Christians must have been proportionately thinned. It is very doubtful indeed if there were a million Christians in the entire Empire of 100,000,000 souls. Since Mithraism did not provoke persecution, but enjoyed imperial favour and State recognition, it would be futile to question that it had far outstripped Christianity.

In 311 the persecutions ceased, and the conversion of the Emperor Constantine opened a new era. Beyond the promotion of Christians, however, and the rich endowment of the Church, Constantine and his successors did not venture to use their power in its favour until 382. How much progress the Church made in that time we cannot measure, but it remained a small minority and its leaders grew impatient. The overwhelming majority of the citizens of the Empire refused to be converted; and a high proportion of those who were converted were of poor character. Then began a series of boy-Emperors, and the policy of coercion was pressed on them. In 382 the revenues of the temples were confiscated. Even in the year after that St. Augustine (*Confessions*, viii, 2) found "nearly the whole nobility" of Rome Pagan; and his description of Rome implies that the mass of the people were not far behind the patricians. But the policy of persecution had been inaugurated in the Eastern Empire in 381. In that year the first coercive decree was issued, and it was followed by others, of increasing severity, in



383, 385, 391, 392, 395, 396, 397, and 399. Every "forerunner and rival of Christianity" was suppressed by imperial force. The temples were sealed by soldiers or destroyed by mobs. The priests were annihilated by confiscation, imprisonment, and even death. From Syria to Gaul every cult was drastically suppressed except that of the orthodox Church. The people, after a period of murmuring, entered the new "churches"—to find their incense and lights and flowers, their legends of miraculous birth and resurrection, their lustral water and silk-robed priests and virgin-mother, restored to life once more. That was "the conversion of the Roman Empire."

With this change coincided another of great importance. The Roman Empire was destroyed by the northern barbarians. The catastrophe involved not only a general descent into a profound and almost inconceivable ignorance, after the relatively high culture of Rome, but it shattered the provincial Churches, and left enough of the city of Rome intact to be still, in such an age, a "great city." This gave the Roman bishops their opportunity; and their claim of supremacy, which had been disdained for three centuries, was enforced. I have given the evidence in *The Popes and their Church*. The increasing ignorance left Europe at the mercy of the Roman clerks, and by forgery and chicanery and bullying the power of Rome grew to its medieval proportions.

In comparison with the appalling blight that then fell upon Europe, the sacred prostitution which had

been practised in a few Eastern temples of the older era is an amiable illusion. The advance of civilization was put back by precisely the thousand years of supreme Papal power, from the sixth to the sixteenth century. The conscientious historian may hesitate to express any judgment on so large a question, involving hundreds of thousands of years of experience, as the utility to man of religion in general. On the specific question whether Europe gained by the mixture of gross ignorance, Thibetan superstition, and unscrupulous priestcraft that was fastened upon it in the fifth and sixth centuries he cannot hesitate, unless it be from motives of prudence. The evil enormously outweighs the scanty gleanings of good which industrious Catholic writers bring with them from their peculiar researches in medieval history. It was a period of appalling crime, vice, brutality, exploitation, deception, spurious and sordid relics, clerical forgeries, monastic hypocrisy, filth, disease, dense ignorance, and social and medical inefficiency, such as we find in the record of no part of the earth which had once attained the height of Roman or Greek culture. The Teutonic invasion does not exonerate the Church. Theodoric in Italy and Charlemagne in Germany proved that there were "barbarian" monarchs ready and able to uplift their people if the Church had co-operated; and we must remember that the Greek Christian world, which was hardly entered by the Teutons, fell almost as low as Europe. It was a period of profound and unparalleled reaction in the story of the

evolution of religion, and the claim of supernatural guidance for such a Church is an outrage.

The renaissance of Europe needs its historian as acutely as does the story of its degradation. Some day, perhaps, a writer with the art, the learning, the leisure, and more than the courage, of Gibbon will tell us, in half-a-dozen astounding volumes, the true story of Christianity. There has hitherto been too general a practice of representing the Renaissance of Greek and Roman letters in the fifteenth century as a sun that dawned suddenly upon the darkness of the Middle Ages. The services of that Renaissance, to science and philosophy as well as to taste, cannot indeed be over-estimated; but the disadvantage of dwelling exclusively upon it is that we do not properly conceive the great artistic and educational movements of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, when little was yet known of Greek culture. The Catholic is therefore apt to claim these, and the germs of science that we find in Gerbert, Roger Bacon, and Albertus Magnus, as native developments out of the culture of the Dark Ages.

The true story of the re-birth must embrace these movements. It will, in the first place, trace the economic and political development, quite independent of religion, which proceeded as soon as the new nations were settled in their territories. Between the fiercely contending kings and barons were the large body of serfs and the small body of citizens who were freed, wooed, and granted privileges by whichever side wanted their aid or their

neutrality. Production was resumed when the last of the invaders were settled. Commerce grew out of the new production and prosperity. Laymen, apart from soldiers and rulers and priests, began to get wealth and taste for art or learning.

But this development would, in accordance with the law of progress I have urged, have been exceedingly slow had Europe not sustained a new cultural invasion. The appointed term of this sketch is now so near that I cannot enlarge upon the rise of Mohammedanism and its rapid creation of a civilization which shamed that of Christian Europe. How Mohammedanism civilized its Arabs in two hundred years, while Christianity took a thousand years to civilize its Teutons, has not been explained by those writers who speak of the civilization of Europe as based upon its new religion. I will call attention to only one circumstance. The Christian Church suppressed Greek culture in Europe, while the Mohammedans, or one branch of them, cherished and developed it. Hence a fresh stream of civilization began to pour across Syria and Asia Minor towards Europe. Dammed at the old channels by the fierce mutual hatred of Greek and Latin, it flowed along the north of Africa and poured over Spain; and through the gaps in the fanatical Christian dykes at the Pyrenees little fertilizing streamlets of it descended once more upon the plains of Europe.

The Scholastic movement of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries would have remained small in its proportions and entirely sterile in its content

but for the impulse and challenge of Spanish-Arabian culture. As it was, it not only made some sort of intellectual system of the crude beliefs of the Middle Ages, but in the case of Bacon and Albertus and others it planted a feeble scientific interest in the mind of Europe. The two forces now acted together. Lay teachers became strong enough to defy the clerical monopoly of learning and make a slight beginning of criticism. Lay lawyers and statesmen took the opportunity of the frequent quarrels of their monarchs with Rome to check the greed and power of the Church. Lay artists cast aside the monastic models and sought inspiration in the glow of living flesh. The deep corruption of the Papacy, the monks, and the clergy assisted them. A Europe that had at last emerged from infancy could not but see the glaring inconsistency of life and ideal. By the beginning of the fifteenth century Councils were strong enough to arraign and depose Popes. The Papacy fought truculently. Religious wars and crusades and massacres and trials by the Inquisition sought to choke in its own blood the growing manhood of Europe, but in the course of the fifteenth century Greek culture, cast out of the east by the Turks, invaded Italy as it had not done since the third century before Christ, and the world smiled again in response to its genial inspiration. Fortunately, the Papacy itself was seduced and deeply corrupted by its hedonistic message, and this provoked and lent success to a fierce revolt of the un-Hellenized Germans.

The second or medieval phase of Christianity ended at the Reformation. Like the Renaissance, the Reformation is quite wrongly conceived by the general public, especially in Germany, as a sudden and semi-miraculous revolt. It was, of course, but the culmination of a development that had proceeded steadily, and had more than once passed into an acute stage, during three centuries. There had been millions of Protestants before Luther. But once the political and moral conditions of the time had given success to the revolt, once the sanguinary power of the Papacy was broken and no adequate religious despotism substituted for it, a new era of criticism and scepticism opened. For a time the Reformers emulated the truculence of the Popes, but the spirit of educated Europe could not now be extinguished. Socinianism timidly suggested that the vast structure of ritual and sacerdotal religion that had been heaped upon the tomb of Christ was illogical and mischievous. Deism took up the strain more boldly, ending in the mildly anti-Christian gospel of Rousseau, the stinging raillery of Voltaire, and the ponderous erudition of liberal German theology. Even Materialism and Atheism began in France to have learned and powerful votaries. By the end of the eighteenth century there were men of commanding ability who believed that the days of Christianity were numbered.

The early decades of the nineteenth century witnessed a reaction. The Deists had been for the most part either bourgeois or noble, and in great measure they silently acquiesced in the new claim

of religion that it was the guardian of social order and the sole preserver of the docility—that is to say, the willingness to live on the pay of a slave—of the peasants and artizans. In the larger interest of property the academic cause of truth was suspended. Where, as in Italy and Spain and Portugal, Voltaireanism still struggled, it struggled in pools of its own blood. But the wheels of the modern world could not be stayed. A new spring, humanitarianism, had been fitted into the mechanism of the planet. It brought general education and democracy, and this cultural and political education of the masses extended the critical attitude which had hitherto been confined to the middle and upper classes.

Simultaneously began the great disillusion of Europe. Modern science and history entered upon their marvellous development, and the Christian story of the world and of man was discovered to be a childish legend that had mocked the intelligence of Europe for fifteen hundred years. Theologians slowly and reluctantly revised their creeds, but neither scholars nor masses could return to the old trust. The inquiry, which had begun with this stupendous discovery of the errors of the Bible, must go further. While, therefore, theologians laboured at reconstruction, men of science and history and philosophy laboured at reinterpreting the universe itself. The question whether Christ was God gave way to the question whether he was really a human moral phenomenon, and at last to the question whether such a person had ever existed. The question whether the soul was regulated in its

future destiny by its beliefs gave place to the question whether it had any future destiny. The question why God had suffered Europe to linger in the Papal illusion for more than a thousand years gave place to the question whether there was a God. Europe reached the inevitable stage in the development of a civilization which had long ago begot Kung-tse and Buddha, Zeno and Epicurus.



## CHAPTER XII

### THE PAST AND THE FUTURE

It will be generally admitted that the principle of evolution has fully sustained its rich promise in the field of religion. The confusion of gods and cults and temples which bewildered our fathers becomes an orderly and intelligible system. The change is like that we notice when a blurred and puzzling figure thrown upon a screen by a lantern is suddenly transformed, by a proper adjustment of the focus of the lens, into a clear and connected image. Not less profitably than in the case of rocks and plants and animals, our mind has been focussed by the doctrine of evolution as we survey the earlier riot of religions, and we have a satisfactory picture of a natural growth. There are still, assuredly, many obscurities. So long has the new view been delayed that parts of the picture have faded beyond restoration, and over the dim patches our scholars will continue to wage their speculative wars. These are trifling inconveniences in comparison with the entire gain of outlook and insight which modern science has given us.

I proposed at the outset to make a close study only of the first and last stages of the evolution of religion. The very considerable uncertainty and

confusion of theories which still overcloud the origin of religion made it expedient to devote special care to the first phase of development, and the circumstance that the evidence of "primitive peoples" has hitherto not been quoted with sufficient discrimination emboldened me to make a fresh inquiry. At least in the very large literature I have consulted—and there were very few works to which I have not had access—I found no writer who based his speculation upon the really lowest peoples known to us. This I have attempted to do, and the conclusions may be briefly stated.

At the lowest level of culture known to us religion consists entirely in the belief that an invisible part of a man lives on after death, and a certain emotional reaction towards these "ghosts." We examined a few peoples who seem not to have reached even this stage. The pure Veddahs explicitly state that they do not know if the *yaku* live on; though the mass of the Veddahs have the vivid Tamil belief in survival and some cult of the dead. The Aetas seem to be in the same condition. The Yahgans most probably are evolving the idea of evil spirits out of living enemies, and are positively described by the best authorities as having no belief in survival. This is a definite pre-religious level. All that we recognize is a dull emotional stirring, which may be accompanied by a faint and abortive effort of imagination, in presence of the dead. And as these peoples are confessedly the lowest in general culture, we are justified in taking them as the original level, not as degenerate lapses from belief.

The Tasmanians and Botocudos represent the nearest approach to an untainted next level, and among these we find a quite definite belief in survival, a conviction that the ghosts are malevolent, and various practical reactions towards them which may be called rudimentary religion. The Semang, the Adamanese, the Bushmen, and various peoples of central Africa and central South America are just as low from the anthropological point of view, but they are more clearly tainted by the culture of higher peoples, and we must draw our deductions from them warily. It is at least clear, from a study of the whole group, that religion does not begin with a belief that an impersonal spiritual force pervades nature. Not one of them has such an idea; whereas all above the very lowest level have a firm belief in concrete human ghosts. It is clear also that magic develops among them simultaneously with religion, neither outstripping it in intensity nor being displaced by it.

If the method I have followed is correct, therefore, the human ghost is the definite beginning of religion. As to the origin of the belief in the ghost I would avoid dogmatism, but in point of fact there is (we saw) considerable evidence that it is the shadow, black in the sun or coloured on water, which inspired the belief in duality. Primitive man's mind is wholly concrete, and so this is the development which we should regard as psychologically probable. Practically all the evidence we may derive from primitive names for what we call "the soul" confirms this. In most cases it means "the shadow," or it is a word

which has lost its meaning. It seems therefore probable that the mysterious shadow, which is inseparably connected with a live man and seems to the savage to emerge from and pop back into him, was the first fact which counted in the evolution of religion. The experience of the dream would enlarge this idea. The "double" was capable of leaving the body and wandering in the village or the forest. In time it was discovered that this offered an explanation of the equally mysterious change which came over a man at times. His body lay helpless as in dreams, so the double had gone; but instead of awakening the body fell to pieces, so presumably the double had gone for ever. The stench may have something to do with the general disposition to regard the dead as malevolent.

From this germ two branches of the religious tree arise: the cult of and speculation about the dead and the development of gods. I am, of course, separating them only for the purpose of treatment. Primitive man, who is not a savage, would be dimly distracted between two attitudes towards the dead. He would be impelled to retain his affection and regard for his dead relatives and friends, yet he would feel that the dead were generally malevolent. Before long he discovers the solution in a distinction between good ghosts and bad ghosts. He asks the aid of the former and propitiates the latter by sacrifices. For a very long time they, in his opinion, haunt the home or the grave or the jungle. He has no idea of a thing which is in itself invisible, so he thinks their power and cleverness must be greatly increased after

death. Then a more satisfactory idea occurs to him. The dead may enter animals, or the land of the dead may be far off, beyond the horizon. In time he finds that other humans live beyond the horizon, and he, doubtless influenced by his practice of burying, puts the land of the dead underground. As his belief in sky-gods develops, he lets more important souls ascend to the home of the gods in the sky; and as ethics begins to tincture his religious beliefs, which it does not do until a late stage, he sends the dead good to the happy sky-land and the dead wicked to the dark and dismal underworld; or else he has two departments of the underworld.

The initial processes of this development lead also to the making of gods, which we have found richly illustrated in the earlier chapters. The Australians and Negroes best exhibit the phase. They do not imagine a diffused mist of supernatural energy which they (or others) then gather into divine personalities. This belief in a pervading, more or less supernatural energy is not general; it is not directly connected with religion, though it naturally mingles with the pre-existing religious belief; and it arises only at the comparatively advanced stage of the Melanesian, the Mongol, and the Amerind. Primitive man generally passes directly from concrete human spirits to concrete superhuman spirits (to use modern language). And the procedure of both African and Australian strongly suggests that the passage consists generally in an aggrandizement, or gradual deification, of dead men, especially dead chiefs. We have seen that in later stages of

development man deliberately manufactures gods and goddesses. By that time he is familiar with the idea of gods, and has generally lost all trace of their human parentage, so that he easily imagines a new deity to explain a new phenomenon or function.

But the evidence recommends us to suppose that the great god-making process of the early phases is the aggrandizement of dead chiefs. At the lower levels of human culture there are no chiefs, and therefore the spirit-world also is a democracy. As social evolution makes tribes and chiefs, the religious world gets godlings. When chiefs become kings, as in Dahomi or Ashanti or early Egypt, the godlings become gods. Exceptionally clever chiefs—good rain-makers, counsellors, or warriors—are just as valuable after death, and they must be propitiated, consulted, flattered, and rewarded. As some men prove exceptionally clever at getting into touch with them, or at defeating the evil spirits, the caste of priests arises; and the priests who get their maintenance by serving the grave-house of a particular chief aggrandize him still further. Men begin to employ priests as they will one day employ lawyers. The fee is worth while.

Agriculture is the next human development, and the changes on earth are, as usual, reflected in heaven. The spirit that haunted a tree or a wood remains in the soil, when the ground is cleared for corn, and becomes a god or (if the women attend to agriculture) goddess of fertility. The gods of sky and rain assume a tremendous importance. They must have food, blood, human sacrifices, maids, babes

—anything that the priests say they need or demand. The original magical significance of these sacrifices is lost, and they become merely demands of the god. The issue of a harvest or of a war is grave; the priests thrive on it. The loser or sufferer may adopt the more powerful god of the victor or of a flourishing neighbour. A single year of exceptional prosperity or adversity may make or mar the fortunes of a god and his priests. The fact that some fetish, possibly a meteoric stone, accompanies the Hebrews on their successful raid into Palestine puts Jahveh on the high road to become the greatest god of all time.

Town-life and the development of intelligence and the fusion of tribes hasten the evolution. The gods take on cultural and ethical attributes. Their priests invent legends which ascribe to the gods all the devices and institutions which lift a people above its savage neighbours. Religion begins at an earlier period than many recent writers suppose to concern itself about ethics. We found this among the Amerinds and Polynesians and others. It is natural. If the germ of religion is respect for one's dead, it is closely connected with the feeling that one's dead parents are as gravely interested after death in the son's conduct as they were during life. On the whole, however, the priests are too much absorbed in the propriety of such conduct as affects their revenue—orthodoxy, bringing sacrifice, ritual, etc.—to pay much attention to morality. For the most part religious evolution has run independently of moral evolution.

What has been called the monotheistic instinct is

■ myth. We have repeatedly examined monotheistic developments, or developments which proceed in the direction of monotheism. Priests always resent and try to suppress rival cults. That is the chief part of the machinery which modern priests call "the monotheistic instinct." In addition, the tribe or State itself helps the process. It wants to suppress the god as well as the king of the people it has conquered. It may, on political grounds, adopt the opposite policy of extreme liberality, for displaced priests are the deadliest rebels in a conquered country. In that case (as in Rome) the pantheon grows to such ludicrous proportions that intelligent men turn for some mental relief to a philosophic monotheism. In most cases there is a compromise. The old and the new gods are connected by ingenious legends into dynastic families, or into Trinities (a very common grouping of gods), or into an attractive family group of father, mother, and son. The son, as time goes on, is very commonly represented as born miraculously.

When art and poetry are developed the legends assume forms which pass in time into theological doctrines and are embodied in elaborate ritual. Two typical legends, we saw, are notable in this respect in that region of the earth which proves the cradle of civilization: one is the miraculous birth of a god from a virgin-mother, the other the death and resurrection of a god. The basis of this seems to be the annual change of the face of nature, either by the scorching sun of summer (as in Egypt), or the blight of winter (as in Asia Minor), or the act of



man in removing crops and fruits. It is an open question, in my opinion, how far the legendary interpretation of this is a genuine religious development. We find nothing in the mythology of tribes of the middle level which leads up to it. It is comparatively late, and has an appearance of poetry. However that may be, the annual loss of vigour of the sun and retirement of the vegetative force beget a complex myth of an earth-mother losing her son for a time, or of the slaying of the genial spirit which warms the earth and the blood, or of an annual re-birth of the sun-god. The birth and resurrection are closely allied.

This poetic elaboration coincides with a development of asceticism. The idea of the "shade" develops into the idea of the "spirit," and it is discovered that this is incalculably more important than the body. Reasoning along that line, individuals and sects come to believe that the flesh hampers and soils the spirit, and must be reduced to subjection. God is now a spirit, and the soul must approach him in nature. Few, of course, outside certain Greek schools of philosophy know what they mean by "spirit." The word generally used is "breath." It is something aerial or ethereal, but supremely important, and the flesh must be sacrificed to the development of its purity. The primitive idea of survival is refined. The soul is now destined to live for ever in the house of Osiris, or Ahura Mazda; and this eternal life is immensely more important than the few decades of weary and perplexed life on earth.

These two developments reached their highest point in the five centuries before the Christian era, and, as they coincided with a considerable intellectual development and a very busy intercourse between the whole of the civilized peoples round the eastern and northern shore of the Mediterranean, a fever for religious reconstruction set in. Various ascetic cults—Serapianism, Mithraism, Essenism, Christianity—spread over the area. Among the bulk of the intellectual minority, however, the same conclusion was drawn as had been drawn in China and India; possibly also, if we had larger knowledge, in Egypt and Babylonia. The whole religious tradition was discarded as a mischievous illusion. At first an attempt was made, by Plato and Socrates, to find a kernel of spiritual truth in the mass of superstition. The more severe reasoning of Aristotle chilled this attempt, and Greece ended by producing Zeno, the founder of the Stoics, and Epicurus. Both spoke of gods or “providence”; and both, like Kung-tse, had very little to do with gods, and did not believe in personal immortality. As the educated Romans inherited these two views of life, and found at least in Stoicism a fine inspiration of social conduct, it seemed that the religious illusion would end its age-long career as soon as the masses were sufficiently educated to think like the minority.

Political accident thwarted this development. Instead of obtaining rulers who were philosophers, as Plato had wished, the Roman Empire got a succession of rulers who were little better educated

than the mass of their people. One of them, almost on the toss of a coin, deserted Jupiter and Mars for Christ, and Christianity began, under imperial favour, to gain ground. At a favourable moment it used the superstition of the ignorant Emperors to crush every rival culture, and Europe was converted at the point of the spear. Stoicism and Epicureanism lingered sullenly in intellectual circles, but just at that moment the Empire fell with a crash. The accidents of life in Asia had thrown the Huns upon Europe; the Huns had thrown the barbarians of northern Europe upon the civilization of the south; the Empire was too exhausted by war and impoverished by economic folly to resist. Amid the ruins of Roman culture, in the profound ignorance of the Dark Ages, the Popes fastened a worse superstition than ever upon Europe.

We return to-day to the point at which Greeks and Romans left the development. As in every other similar phase of civilization, we have three fundamental attitudes. One is the position of the uncultivated masses who have not leisure or training to judge for themselves. This would make for conservatism but for the fact that the democracy is aroused against the Church and the clergy for keeping it in gross ignorance so long, misleading and exploiting it, and siding almost invariably against it in the modern struggle for emancipation and justice. There is therefore not the same consistently conservative attitude in the mass as there was in the Athenian or the Roman or Hindu or

Chinese masses. Cheap literature has made a vast difference. Our workers may, as no democracy ever could before, keep in the closest touch with the thinkers of their age. In the cities of Europe and America they have, in an extraordinary proportion, come to regard all religion as an illusion, and to take a purely secular view of life. There are countries, such as France, where the great majority of them have discarded all religion. Probably in every industrial region or centre in the world the majority of the working men have reached this stage. The sceptical temper engendered by the War and by the efforts of the clergy to force religion on them by means of military discipline will accelerate the decay of faith.

This is a new thing in the world, and few of the philosophers who speculate about the future of religion seem to have realized it. The feverish attempts of the clergy to reconstruct and reinterpret and sophisticate their creeds do not for a moment arrest the growth of popular scepticism. These sophistications appeal only to more or less educated people. The artisan lives in a world of realities. Tell him that the miraculous birth and resurrection of Christ are illusions, and you will then waste your breath in assuring him that there is "a certain truth" in them. He is discarding the last of the great religions.

The only question for any impartial observer is whether the future will dispense entirely with religion, or merely reduce it to a Platonic belief in God. Certain features of the future are clear.

Within this or the next generation Christianity will heal all its costly schisms and gather all its sects again into one organization. We shall see a reunion of Christendom to fight so-called "Infidelity." And as the same ferment is spreading, more slowly, in Asia and even Africa, there will later be an affiliation of Christianity, Mohammedanism, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Other religions are doomed.

But the fate of the future does not to-day rest with the clergy and their movements. It rests with thinkers and scholars. Here we find the second and third fundamental attitudes of which I spoke. Some are for discarding religion finally as a useless, if not mischievous, illusion. Some are for shedding every Christian, Mohammedan, and other doctrine, and retaining a pure Theism. It is a repetition of history. On one side are Plato and Socrates; on the other Zeno and Epicurus. I write here merely as an historian, and do not discuss the merits of the respective sides. But the historical study of the matter is perhaps more illuminating than the metaphysical. In the course of two hundred years, since the revolt against traditional religion reached large proportions, the knowledge by which we may test and judge the issue has enormously increased. Historically, what has been the effect of this increase of knowledge?

Agnosticism, or Secularism, has grown in strict proportion to our discoveries. In the first half of the eighteenth century practically every anti-Christian writer was a Deist. He rejected Christianity, but held to the belief in God and immortality. In

the second half of the eighteenth century a few Atheists or Materialists appeared among the rebels. In the early part of the nineteenth century there was, as I explained, a reaction on political and social grounds, but before the middle of the century the attack was renewed. It was now predominantly Agnostic, not Deistic, and the proportion of Agnostics has steadily increased. Very few of our scholars, whose word would have weight with the masses, lend the distressed Churches even the support of their names. Few of them ever announce, in spite of the desperate wishes of the Churches, that they believe in a personal God; and still fewer of them believe in personal immortality.

We seem, therefore, to have entered upon the last phase. I have in this work surveyed a world of illusions. The Christian would make an exception for his particular chapter of the chronicle, but his most characteristic beliefs are plainly those of earlier religions in a new dress. Ours is the age of disillusion. If so many puerilities and absurdities have been taught with all the solemnity and truculent positiveness of religion, we distrust the whole tradition. It seems to many people that if there is a God at all he ought at least to have prevented the enforcement of so many follies, the perpetration of so many crimes, and the squandering of such precious resources, in his name. We distrust the entire content of religion. It seems to be merely a case of the evolution in human consciousness of a primitive illusion. The philosopher kneeling to God—if any modern philosopher ever does—is only the other

end of a series that starts with the Andaman islander pondering over his "shadow" on the water.

One imagines a sociologist of the future closing the ledger which is marked "Religion." "A fairy tale of humanity's youth," he will say. "During two hundred thousand years or so of barbarism it was intelligible. It was lucky to survive ten thousand years of civilization; but, of course, it was by that time embodied in wealthy and powerful institutions, and they fought for their life. It might have died out in the nineteenth or twentieth century, when it was so thoroughly exposed, but for the fact that it had its vast armies of priests bullying and intimidating, coaxing and bribing, wheedling and persuading. They died of inanition, because men came to realize at last that the weekly orgy of flattering God was an anachronism. Then religion became the fad or philosophy of a few, lingering for one or two centuries. Men had discovered that reliance on supernatural help was injurious. It left the resources of their own moral strength insufficiently exploited. A singular thing to discover after two hundred thousand years of magic and religion! But that was man's infancy. It is nothing to the millions of years of human life that remain. People talked in the twentieth century as if they were the flower of human development. Civilization was just beginning. We shall see what it will do when it ceases to serve gods and expends all its resources in serving itself."

It seems to me that a study of the last two centuries alone suffices to inspire this expectation.

Unbelief in Christianity has grown to remarkable proportions. The clergy hastened to put forward the moral and social plea, but it is a somewhat humorous contention when we see the world growing steadily less religious, yet healthier and better to live in. The old query, "What will you put instead of religion?" has lost its point. Even half a century ago an honest inquirer might have asked what Kung-tse or Buddha or Epicurus had put instead of religion. He did not really want to know. But his question is now foolish. If the world grew worse as religion decays, there might be some plausible ground for anxiety. It is so far from deteriorating that eminent preachers assure their congregations that ours is the first age in which Christ's principles have been really understood and applied!

The great need of our time is to get over the transition as speedily as possible and organize the inspiration of life. The Church once maintained that it alone could teach, or prevent crime, or secure justice. The State does these things to-day infinitely better than the Church ever did. It will do equally well whatever other things of practical importance have hitherto been left to the clergy. Is the spectacle of Europe to-day a compliment to the moral power of the clergy or of Christian principles? We begin to talk of trying a League of Nations instead. Let us finish with the whole illusion and cultivate the living bodies and minds of men instead of their imagined "shades" and the gods who have grown out of them.



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